# Thirding North/South

## Mexico and Turkey in international development politics

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# DECLARATION

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

# ABSTRACT


## Thirding North/South: Mexico and Turkey in international development politics

Sebastian Haug

International development politics has traditionally been shaped by a fundamental set of binary imaginaries: the 'developed' and dominant 'North', on the one hand, and the 'developing' and marginalised (and recently more vocal) 'South', on the other. While empirical realities have always been more complex than the inter-state distinction between 'North' and 'South' suggests, the North/South binary has remained a major reference for how international development is thought about and practiced. In this dissertation, Mexico and Turkey take centre stage as countries that have long been at odds with North/South assignations. Building on insights from queer studies and Edward Soja's spatial theory, I develop the *Thirding Lens* as a heuristic to examine how Mexico and Turkey are positioned in and engage with international development politics, and how they contribute to reproducing, challenging and transforming North/South. Based on 18 months of fieldwork and more than 250 interviews, I develop the notions of Either/Or approximation, Both/And simultaneity and Neither/Nor emancipation as conceptual tools to approach and make sense of phenomena that do not fit with binaries. With reference to the expanding literature on South-South cooperation and the changing contours of international development, I argue that a detailed engagement with empirical evidence beyond the mainstream focus on major 'Northern' donors and the most visible 'Southern' providers offers valuable insights for understanding broader dynamics in the field. As a conceptual contribution, the *Thirding Lens* offers a framework for a systematic analysis of complexity, in international development and beyond.

*To that room without a view*

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Vielen kleinen Orten, die
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# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| AKP | *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [Justice and Development Party] |
| AMEXCID | *Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* [Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation] |
| BRI | Belt and Road Initiative |
| BRICS | Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| ECLAC | Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean |
| EU | European Union |
| FfD | Financing for Development |
| G1 | Group of 1 |
| G20 | Group of 20 |
| G7 | Group of 7 |
| G77 | Group of 77 |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GIZ | *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* [Corporation for International Cooperation] |
| GNI | Gross National Income |
| GPEDC | Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| IMEXCI | *Instituto Mexicano de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* [Mexican Institute for International Development Cooperation] |
| IsDB | Islamic Development Bank |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |

| | |
|---|---|
| LDC | Least Developed Country |
| MIKTA | Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, Australia |
| NAFTA | North American Free Trade Agreement |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation |
| OCHA | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PRI | *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* [Institutional Revolutionary Party] |
| PROCID | *Programa de Cooperación Internacaional para el Desarrollo* [International Development Cooperation Programme] |
| SEGIB | *Secretaría General Iberoamericana* [Ibero-American General Secretariat] |
| TIKA | *Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı* [Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency] |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UK | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| US | United States of America |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

# Introduction.

> "[H]uman beings have a strong dramatic instinct toward binary thinking, a basic urge to divide things into two distinct groups, with nothing but an empty gap in between"
>
> Hans Rosling

> "Binary distinctions are an analytic procedure, but their usefulness does not guarantee that existence divides like that"
>
> Mary Douglas

Binary distinctions are popular devices to structure and make sense of the world. Across space and time, binaries have shaped approaches to social realities in different issue areas and at different scales, from the division between body and mind, or the distinction between human and non-human to questions of gender, sexuality and spirituality (Lloyd 1984; Gaten 1996; Bakare-Yusuf 2003; Barker and Iantaffi 2019). The binary oppositions of yes/no, inside/outside or right/wrong have often been fundamental to how people make sense of their experiences, and how institutions regulate and shape social interaction. Following Norberto Bobbio (1989), the social can be said to have been shaped by "great dichotomies", all relying on a binary opposition that subsumes "a wide range of other important distinctions and that attempts (more or less successfully) to dichotomize the social universe in a comprehensive and sharply demarcated way" (Weintraub 1997, 1). Binaries have also frequently structured inter-governmental relations and the analysis of world politics (Weiss 2009; Katzenstein 2018) – including, and maybe particularly, with regard to international development.

The very idea of 'international development' as a specific social sphere has been strongly associated with a set of fundamental inter-state binaries: the haves and have-nots, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor. At least since Harry S. Truman (1949), then President of the United States (US), set out his vision for assisting those parts of the world "living in misery", the traditional logic of international development has assumed that economically and institutionally stronger countries are in a position, under a moral obligation and/or (out of self-interest) well advised to assist those worse off (Lancaster 2007). The binary of haves and have-nots as well as the evolving dynamics associated with it have been captured through different sets of terminologies, from industrialised/underdeveloped to First World/Third World or developed/developing (Escobar 1995). More recently, the distinction between

'North' and 'South' – initially popularised through the 1980 Brandt Report (ICIDI 1980) – has been *en vogue* to capture related global imaginaries (Costa Pinheiro 2017; Wagner 2017; Haug et al. forthcoming).

A key assumption in the international development sector has been that 'developed' countries are expected to assist 'undeveloped', 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' countries with addressing socio-economic challenges. Against this backdrop, the traditional focus in the study and practice of international development was directed at 'Northern' donors, particularly members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) such as the US and Western European countries, that provided assistance to 'Southern' recipients, most of them members of the Group of 77 (G77) as alliance of 'developing countries' from Africa, Asia as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. Empirical realities, of course, have always been more complex than the developed/developing distinction suggested and breached supposedly clear-cut binaries in all sorts of ways. In some cases, development-related country classifications and donor/recipient relations experienced significant change over time, with the so-called Asian Tigers as prominent disruptors of simplistic binaries (Lall 1996; Paldam 2003).

Since the turn of the millennium, however, the "rise of the South" (UNDP 2013a) – now also referred to as the 'Global South' (Taylor 2014) – has been said to upset traditional imaginaries even more forcefully. An expanding body of work has focused on so-called 'Southern providers', often also referred to as 'emerging donors' or 'rising powers' (Manning 2006; Woods 2008; Hart and Jones 2010; Eyben 2013; Gu et al. 2016; Oakley 2016). While some contributions have explicitly pointed to the wide variety and heterogeneity of development cooperation providers outside the DAC (Mawdsley 2012), most analyses have focused on the increasing clout of China, Brazil and India, either as stand-alone case studies or as groupings (Bräutigam 2009; Taylor 2011; Abdenur and Marcondes 2013; Curtis 2013; Abdenur 2014; Li and Carey 2014; Mawdsley 2014; Stephen 2014; Weinlich 2014; Kragelund 2015; Carey and Li 2016). Existing literature highlights that the Chinese, Brazilian and Indian governments have repeatedly refused to be classified as 'donors' and have instead framed their engagement with international development as 'South-South' solidarity among 'developing countries' in explicit opposition to DAC-led development assistance schemes.

Over the last two decades, the meanings associated with the notion of *North/South* have thus undergone substantial evolution, but they have not disappeared. On the contrary, recent

changes – particularly the increasing visibility of China, India and Brazil – have "put the idea of the Global South back on the political and intellectual map" (Hurrell 2013, 217). With references to 'Southern' difference in political narratives of contestation (Prashad 2012; Uddin 2017; Tricontinental 2019), expanding institutional spaces for 'South-South' cooperation in multilateral relations (García et al. 2014; Gosovic 2016; Haug 2016a; Milhorance and Soulé-Kohndou 2017), or a growing tendency among academics to frame their work as research in and on the 'Global South' (see Pagel et al. 2014; Haug et al. forthcoming), the North/South binary is very much alive, arguably more so than ever before. Despite strong evidence of variegated levels of economic and political power across regions that have been discussed with reference to an increasingly multipolar or multiplex world (Amin 2012; Cooper and Flemes 2013; Acharya 2017), international development politics has in many ways remained attached to the North/South binary; namely, to the division between the (developed and traditionally dominant) 'North' – embodied by the members of the DAC – and the (traditionally marginalized and recently more vocal) 'South', with the G77 as their shared platform.

Against this backdrop, I turn to Mexico and Turkey – two states that, as members of the Group of 20 (G20), have repeatedly been referenced in broader debates about 'rising powers' as "second-tier" (White 2011, 1; Tank 2012, 2) actors but that usually fall off the radar in more detailed analyses of the changing international development landscape (see Manning 2006; Woods 2008; Walz and Ramachandran 2011; Rowlands 2012; Gu et al. 2016). While Mexican and Turkish realities are complex configurations and quite distinct in terms of geographical, cultural, social and historical features, I suggest that they serve as what Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) refers to as paradigmatic cases: Mexican and Turkish membership patterns in development-related multilateral organisations and alliances epitomise country positionalities at odds with the North/South binary. Unlike China, Brazil and India, Mexico and Turkey are members of the OECD and thus, institutionally speaking, closer to the core group of high-income countries; but they are not part of the DAC and thus occupy a somewhat marginal position in the club of 'developed' countries. At the same time, Turkey and Mexico are often counted among those players that actively engage with 'South-South' schemes; but they are not part of the G77, unlike most other G20 members outside the DAC (*see Annex 2.5*).

This is the point of departure for examining Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns in international development politics. To do so, this dissertation evolves

around three interconnected questions that are set to guide empirical and conceptual discussions. The primary research question focuses on concrete country experiences:

> *(1) Against the backdrop of the North/South binary, how have Mexico and Turkey been positioned in and engaged with international development politics?*

On a methodological-conceptual level, this leads to a secondary research question:

> *(2) How is one to examine positionalities and engagement patterns against the backdrop of the North/South binary?*

This, in turn, is connected to a larger – tertiary – research question that points to a more general discussion to which this dissertation aims to make a modest contribution:

> *(3) How is one to approach and make sense of phenomena at odds with binaries, in international development politics and beyond?*

Based on insights from research on liminality, queer studies and contributions to the spatial turn in the social sciences, I build on different ways of engaging with dominant binaries to develop the *Thirding Lens*. I borrow the term *Thirding* from Edward Soja's work on how to overcome epistemological and ontological binaries in the study of social realities. Soja's notion of Thirding is not only about the introduction of a third element *per se* but offers "another mode of thinking" (Soja 1996, 11): it puts forward an invitation to focus on the particular ways in which binaries evolve and are dealt with. What I call Thirding Lens combines three perspectives that approach binaries in different ways. Where an *Either/Or* perspective assumes the relevance of a given set of binary oppositions, a *Both/And* perspective challenges their mutual exclusivity. A *Neither/Nor* perspective, in turn, refuses to accept the spaces established by binaries as a given and explores the beyond. Taken together, these perspectives offer a three-step process to investigate how phenomena relate to or engage with a given set of binaries, and to examine the extent to which they contribute to binaries being challenged, transformed, reproduced or left behind.

With the application of the Thirding Lens to Mexican and Turkish experiences in international development politics, I use the – contested yet resilient – North/South binary as a starting and reference point for analysis. In Chapter 1, I provide a more detailed discussion of the evolving nature and continuing relevance of North/South. Based on that, I introduce Mexico and Turkey as configurations that, in many ways, are at odds with this binary setup and – as

paradigmatic cases – promise to provide relevant insights into more general dynamics in international development. In Chapter 2, I set up a conceptual framework for approaching Mexico and Turkey. In light of a wide range of existing labels that try to capture middling levels in international hierarchies – from semi-periphery to middle powers or cusp states – I turn to liminality research and queer studies for conceptual inspiration in order to make sense of positionalities and engagement patterns that do not 'fit' with existing binaries. By combining these insights with Edward Soja's notion of Thirding, I develop the Thirding Lens as a three-step heuristic for examining positionalities and experiences at odds with dominant binaries. Leading on to the main part of the analysis, I engage in a brief discussion of research methodologies, methods and questions of positionality during the research process itself.

While the focus on 'Mexico' and 'Turkey' reflects the traditional dominance of inter-state and inter-governmental dynamics in the field of international development politics, the empirical sources I draw on point to both the ubiquity and inherent complexity of country units. In addition to reports and statistics issued by multilateral organisations, official Mexican and Turkish accounts as well as academic, media and think tank sources, I build on insights from observations and 259 interviews with Mexican and Turkish officials as well as representatives from multilateral bodies, bilateral agencies and non-governmental entities conducted mainly in New York City, Mexico City, Ankara, Istanbul and Paris between March 2016 and December 2017. The combination of these sources allows me to draw on and bring together official identity narratives, the ways in which international development audiences have perceived and framed Mexico and Turkey, as well as the lived experiences of those supposed to act on behalf of or embody Mexico and Turkey. While taking long-term historical trajectories into account, the analysis centres on the last two decades that – with the 'rise of the South' alluded to above – have seen considerable shifts in international development politics.

With the conceptual and methodological stage set, in subsequent chapters I apply the Thirding Lens to Mexican and Turkish realities. In Chapter 3, I employ the perspective of Either/Or to examine the ways in which Mexico and Turkey are positioned vis-à-vis 'North' and 'South' respectively – the varying levels of closeness and distance – and discuss how their distinct ways of approximating the traditional poles of international development are part of Thirding dynamics. In Chapter 4, I use a Both/And perspective to investigate patterns and claims of simultaneous belonging and then focus on the different ways in which Mexico and Turkey (try to) connect 'North' and 'South'. This leads to a discussion of the ways in which Mexican and

Turkish engagement patterns contain the best and/or the worst of 'North' and 'South'. I close the chapter by discussing how simultaneous belonging, combination and connecting attempts contribute to Thirding dynamics. In Chapter 5, I employ a Neither/Nor perspective to examine the ways in which Mexican and particularly Turkish positionalities reflect notions of exceptionalism – the bright side of Neither/Nor – and then turn to experiences of isolation and exclusion. Building on this, I explore the ways in which Mexican and Turkish engagement patterns – from cooperation schemes to reporting practices – contain elements of different 'normalities' that point beyond the North/South binary, leading to an appreciation of the strong Thirding element inherent in the logic of Neither/Nor.

In Chapter 6, I return to the overarching research questions set out above to provide summaries of how Mexico and Turkey have been positioned in and engaging with international development politics, and a condensed account of the Thirding Lens as conceptual tool. Moving beyond Mexico and Turkey, I then apply the Thirding Lens to illustrate how conceptual insights developed in previous chapters – on approximation, simultaneity and emancipation – can be used to make sense of a range of other country positionalities and engagement patterns. I underline the need to move beyond simplistic labels and argue that the three-legged heuristic of the Thirding Lens provides an intuitive, nuanced and analytically productive way of accounting for complexity in binary settings. Finally, I discuss how Thirding patterns challenge not only North/South but a whole range of other binaries and thus contribute to the current liminal phase of international development politics.

This dissertation makes a contribution to understanding Mexican and Turkish realities in the field of international development politics, beyond cursory references to them being 'second-tier' players, by providing a detailed analysis of their positionalities and engagement patterns. It also speaks to literature about the changing landscape of international development politics, the growing clout and evolving dynamics of South-South (development) cooperation, North/South relations as well as the idiosyncratic trajectories of today's so-called 'rising powers.' More generally, this dissertation provides insights not only into exemplars of what evolving realities between and beyond 'North' and 'South' look like, but also how they can be approached and examined. As a conceptual contribution, the Thirding Lens stands out as a proposition for how to engage with phenomena at odds with dominant binaries, in international development and beyond.

# Chapter 1.

## North/South and international development politics

In order to make sense of international development politics as a specific structured social space in which positionalities and engagement patterns unfold, I suggest understanding it as a 'field'. Since the 1940s, there have been a number of authors using the field concept to make sense of the international sphere (Mannheim 1941; Wright 1955; Rummel 1975; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Pouliot and Mérand 2013). Beyond disciplinary allegiances and methodological preferences, what these contributions share is a focus on relationality: they all try to make sense of how entities and their positionalities shape and are shaped by the structures and processes in which social realities unfold (Cohen 2018). With field conceptualisations, questions of status and struggles over positionalities take centre stage (Esteves and Assunção 2014; Paul et al. 2014; Larson et al. 2014) – and across different scales of social interaction, binaries have been a fundamental feature of how relations in fields are structured and understood (Pouliot and Mérand 2013, 34; see Wright 1955). While there has also been a considerable set of traditions that think in more than two categories – including in Hindu, Buddhist, Celtic, Roman or Christian teachings and practices (Pettazzoni 1946; Marriott 1989; Gyatso 2003; Kärkkäinen 2004; Dlugan 2009; Scherer 2011) – binaries such as right/wrong, good/evil or friend/enemy have strongly shaped social interaction across time and space (Elbow 1993; Russell 2005; Deleuze and Guattari 2011[1987], 5f and 25; Levine 2016; Katzenstein 2018; Rosling 2018). Dualist and structuralist accounts have explicitly built on binary oppositions as foundation, assuming that "for some particular domain, there are two fundamental kinds or categories of things or principles" (Robinson 2017, 1; see Cuddon 2013) where "each unit is defined against what it is not" (Ferdinand de Saussure, cited in Fogarty 2005, para 1; Sanders 2015, 1). Binaries as fundamental organising devices have provided the basis for Boolean algebra, computational 0/1 coding, the Chinese book of I-Ching and an influential and often violent strand of European modernity (Alexander 2013; Walter 2014; Goga 2015; Thomassen 2015; Wolfram 2015). Importantly, they have conditioned

"comprehensive conceptual mapping[s] in view of world-ordering" (Wagner 2017, 10) as precursors to what would evolve into the field of international development politics.

In longstanding macro-imaginaries such as the divide between 'Orient' and 'Occident' or the distinction between Old World and New World, one category or pole appeared only through its encounter with the other (Dussel 2003; Fuster 2017). On a global scale, the different stages and manifestations of the 'colonial encounter' and their "unilateral reification" (Wagner 2017, 11) through domination of the 'colonised' through the 'colonisers' from the 16th century onwards, had a decisive impact on the unfolding of asymmetrical binary relations that were to shape the mental maps of international development (Escobar 1995; Kapoor 2008; McEwan 2009). From the perspective of metropoles, colonies were that Other part of the world that not only provided resources but also, and importantly, needed to be tamed and taken care of (Bendix 2018). While different waves of decolonisation efforts (Kennedy 2016) began to alter dynamics of domination from the late 18th century onwards, first in the Americas, then after the First World War (1914-1918) and finally after the Second World War (1939-1945), the underlying binary mapping remained largely intact. In the context of Cold War imagery – built on the binary opposition between 'East' and 'West' – it was the notion of 'development' that framed the ways in which the Soviet Union and the US engaged with the recently decolonised Other part of the world (Escobar 1995).[1] While this led to a three-way division in imaginaries of global space – incorporating what the French scholar Alfred Sauvy (1952, para 12) referred to as *Tiers Monde* [Third World] – the dominant forces remained attached to the bipolar division between a US-led 'First World' and a Soviet-led 'Second World'. By and large, 'Third World' became a popular frame for "a residual bloc of underdeveloped regions" (Costa Pinheiro 2017, 55), somewhere beyond and yet intrinsically related to East/West dynamics (see Ayoob 1989; Prashad 2008).

Against this backdrop, the 1980 Brandt Report (ICIDI 1980, 31) – the flagship document of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues – took up the binary division of 'North' and 'South' that had come out of debates about international inequality and the rise of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) members in the 1960s and 1970s (Costa Pinheiro 2017, 59) to present a shorthand for making sense of material realities at a global scale. Motivated by an agenda of reducing structural inequalities and addressing

[1] While post-war modernisation theories of development were built on notions of linear progress, they had a strong leaning towards developed/underdeveloped binary reifications; see Rostow 1959.

dynamics of marginalization, the so-called Brandt Line divided the world map in two parts, suggesting that "'North' and 'South' were broadly synonymous with 'rich' and 'poor', 'developed' and 'developing'" (ICIDI 1980, 31; *see Annex 2.1*). In its framing of global relationality, the Brandt Report thus

> eliminated what for three decades had been seen as the most significant distinction, the one between Western democratic capitalism and Soviet socialism, between First and Second World (Wagner 2017, 4).

While for much of the second part of the 20th century – in Peter Wagner's (2017, 4) words – the 'South' as 'Third World' had "had two Norths", the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s meant that the 'Second' World all but disappeared from popular imaginaries (see Müller 2018). Against this backdrop, the notion of the '(Global) South' became an increasingly popular way of referring to the Other in what, fundamentally, had remained a binary approach to the world as divided between 'haves' and 'have-nots' (see FAO 1995; Kraay 2012). With this framing, the 'North' (the 'First World') had come to refer to the 'industrialised' parts of the world, including agents and institutions representing or attached to countries in North America (Canada and the US), Western Europe, East Asia (Japan) and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). The 'South' (the 'Third World'), in turn, had become a shorthand for the 'underdeveloped' parts of the world – namely in Africa, Asia and the Pacific as well as Latin America and the Caribbean. The particular relationship between 'Northern' and 'Southern' countries that this binary has come to suggest is thus a highly unequal one, creating an inherently hierarchical international space (Escobar 1995; McEwan 2009). North/South implies stratification dynamics of "vertical relations of super- and subordination" (Zarakol 2017b, 1) that put the 'North' – the 'rich' and 'developed' (part of the) world – above and in considerable distance to the 'poor' and 'developing' (part of the) world, i.e. the 'South'. As I will discuss below, the inadequacies and contradictions of this binary mapping have only become more apparent over time. What has been remarkable though is the resilience of North/South constructs in the face of rather obvious porosities and blurring.

# 1. North/South as a tale of donors and recipients

Relations in a field are conditioned not only by fundamental structuring logics and broad hierarchies but also through more specific rules and implicit expectations. Taken-for-granted assumptions in particular – related to what has been referred to as "common knowledge" (Geanakoplos 1992), "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi 1966; Collins 2000) or "doxa" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Pouliot and Mérand 2013) – have a powerful impact on how social interaction unfolds. The structures of meaning that shape behaviour and define the attributes that are of particular value in a field tend to be taken as a given. While there has been a considerable body of critical literature on the underlying dynamics in international development processes (Ferguson 1990; Mosse 2005; Li 2007; McEwan 2009), the 'ways things work' among agents and institutions are hardly ever explicitly addressed in practice. Building on earlier patterns of strategic and/or targeted support between large collective entities, including empires and states (Markovits et al. 2018), in the late 1940s the so-called Truman doctrine set out what Gillian Hart (2001, 650; 2010) has referred to as "a post-second world war project of intervention in the 'third world' that emerged in the context of decolonization and the cold war."

In his inaugural speech, US President Truman (1949, para 44f) announced that the US would support the "underdeveloped" parts of the world "living in misery" to "help them realize their aspirations for a better life" as "[t]heir poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas." As Cláudio Costa Pinheiro (2017, 55) has argued, Truman's speech consolidated "a wholly new ontology of otherness … [and] immediately made two billion people across the world underdeveloped." Since then, the mainstream practice and study of 'international development' has been presented as evolving around the question of "how to help poor countries become richer" (Lentfer 2017, para 2) – with the assumption that answers would need to centre on "industrialized nations helping to improve living conditions in the rest of the world" (Rosenkranz 2009, para 1; see Chari and Corbridge 2008; Lewis 2019). While there have been a wide range of purposes linked to the provision of 'foreign aid' or 'assistance' – from the fostering of politico-military alliances to international status, economic interests and organizational logics in state ministries (Lancaster 2007; Markovits et al. 2018) – the

dedication to bettering the plight of the worse off in what was soon to be referred to as the 'Third World' has been a major part of official rhetoric.

Many – mostly but not only academic – voices have challenged the discursive reproduction of this divide. Contributions from critical strands within different disciplines – including geography, sociology, anthropology and development studies – have been at the forefront of developing postcolonial critiques of rhetorical and conceptual binaries, and how they affect international development (Escobar 1995; Lehmann 1997; Kothari 2007; Kapoor 2008; McEwan 2009). In practice, however, the traditional rules and assumptions in the field largely remained unquestioned until the early 2000s and have centred around the distinction between two sets of actors: 'donors' and 'recipients' (see Mawdsley 2012). As members of the OECD – the "rich countries' club" (Kalinowski and Cho 2012, 246) – donor countries have exercised influence through their bilateral or regional programmes and their contributions to multilateral organisations. Set up as the OECD Development Assistance Group in 1960, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has been the donors' club in the club (Hynes and Scott 2013; *see Annex 2.2*). While the DAC includes both larger and smaller donors – from the US as heavyweight to donors like Portugal that historically have been of minor relevance – and thus has never been homogenous (Kondoh et al. 2010, 6), as an entity it continues to shape the frameworks and rules that have dominated international development processes for decades (Esteves and Assunção 2014; OECD 2019a). The arguably most prominent and powerful tool has been Official Development Assistance (ODA). Since the 1960s, the DAC has used ODA as the main standard and indicator for development assistance flows (Hynes and Scott 2013; OECD 2018b). The most recent official definition describes ODA as government-provided flows that are "[c]oncessional (i.e. grants and soft loans) and administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective" (OECD 2019b, para 3). The donor/recipient and developing/developed binaries underlying the definition of ODA have contributed to translating "economic asymmetries into political hierarchy" (Esteves and Assunção 2014, 1786) and shaping the dominant understanding of 'development cooperation.'

The modalities of cooperation provided by 'Northern' donors to 'Southern' recipients has typically consisted of technical assistance, budget support, loans or debt relief (Nilsson 2004; Rosenkranz 2011; OECD 2019c). As the self-proclaimed "gold standard" (OECD 2019b, para 1) for deciding what counts, or does not count, as development assistance, ODA (including its

evolving definition and operationalisation practices) has been the main authoritative mechanism through which capital and resources in the field of international development politics have been appreciated and allocated to 'developing countries'. The DAC has been the centre of authority on ODA and – thanks to the weight of its members – the *de facto* powerhouse of most bilateral and multilateral development-related transfers, including at the UN (UNDP 2019a). Through its regularly updated beneficiary list, the DAC has had an explicit instrument to regulate assistance eligibility. The indicator used for determining whether a country can be classified as 'recipient' is based on income per capita data from the World Bank. Including all countries outside the high-income category (OECD 2019d), the ODA recipient list has thus provided a concrete expression of the widespread notion that international development is about "aid from Northern countries to the South" (Horner 2019a, 1; *see Annex 2.3*).

Based on the binary of 'Northern donors' and 'Southern recipients', international development politics thus reflects a combination of what Ayşe Zarakol has referred to as narrow and broad understandings of social hierarchies. As a widely accepted standard for the allocation of development-related resources, ODA has been part of a set of "bargained solutions to problems of order" built on "deep structures of organised inequality" (Zarakol 2017b, 4 and 7). The hierarchical distinction between donors and recipients in relations between political entities goes back a long way, conditioned by the 'colonial encounter' alluded to above. As Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton (1996) have argued, it was with reference to domestic state-led interventions in 19$^{th}$ century Europe, which attempted to respond to social challenges produced by the destructive moments of capitalist expansion, that a paternalistic notion of trusteeship was applied to European colonies (Bendix 2018; Lewis 2019). The main goal was to smoothen economic processes and the exercise of political power in order "to ameliorate the disordered faults of progress" (Cowen and Shanton 1996, 6). Building on patterns of imperial and colonial mindsets and forms of exploitation (Dainotto 2011; Dussel 2003; Levander and Mignolo 2011; Lewis 2019), the institutionalisation of international development around the North/South binary thus provides a key example for the coloniality of global structures where past inequalities live on and evolve through more or less institutionalised hierarchies (Escobar 1995; Quijano 2007; Bendix 2018). As Emma Mawdsley (2019, 4) has argued with reference to work by Arturo Escobar and Uma Kothari, for the second part of the 20th century

> [t]he postcolonial cartographies of 'development' were read through essentialised dichotomies of North-South, developed-underdeveloped, First-Third World, which framed supposedly moral and geopolitical justifications for intervention and (supposed) acquiescence.

Also and maybe particularly those contributions intending to put forward a more 'progressive' agenda – such as the Brandt Report itself – have relied on binary notions to argue for the need to address current challenges (see Sachs 2005; Sachs 2014; Lauer and Lepenies 2015; Brand and Wissen 2018; Lessenich 2018; Gates and Gates 2019). Despite a considerable body of critique and accounts highlighting other cross-cutting divisions that have shaped global patterns of privilege and exploitation – such as social class (Cannadine 2001), forms of capitalist accumulation (Scott 2001, 167f; Piketty 2014; Taylor 2014; Stiglitz 2015) or gender (McClintock 1994; Bradford 1996; Ghosh 2004) – the imaginaries of 'North' and 'South', 'developed' and 'developing', 'donors' and 'recipients' have remained at the heart of international development politics. As a shorthand, North/South has stood for the logic underlying both explicitly designed institutions (such as ODA and the DAC itself) as well as the uneven material geographies of power and wealth they are said to build on and embody.

## 2. The rise of the 'South' – and the end of North/South?

Countries from the 'South' or 'Third World' began to challenge the hegemony of the double 'North' of 'First' and 'Second' Worlds in the 1950s and particularly the 1960s. This included landmark events such as the 1955 Bandung conference where representatives from 29 countries in Asia and Africa met to denounce (neo)colonialism and promote cooperation (see Nesadurai 2005; Anderson 2015), as well as the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 as an institutionalised alternative to East/West dynamics (Miskovic et al. 2014). At the UN, the growing group of 'developing countries' that had recently gained independence pushed in a coordinated effort for the setup of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). With the signature of the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries" at the first UNCTAD in 1964, these efforts led to the establishment of the Group of 77 (G77). From the outset "intended as a counterweight" to the OECD (Toye 2014, 1762), the G77 became the key alliance for voicing opposition towards the *status quo* in international

affairs – particularly with regard to trade rules – and promoting programmatic explorations linked to the idea of a New International Economic Order (Prashad 2012; Taylor 2014; G77 n.d.).

By the late 1970s, however, the collective strength of G77 member states had ebbed away, or had been successfully crushed (Prashad 2012). Major debt crises and the ensuing focus on structural adjustment turned the 1980s into a "lost decade" for most 'developing countries', particularly in Africa and Latin America (Ridley 1989; Singer 1989). In multilateral fora, 'Southern' elites' *de facto* "commitment to neoliberal capitalism" (Mawdsley 2019, 6; see Taylor 2014; Kapoor 2015) muted the potential for any meaningful contestation of 'Northern' dominance. On top of that, the increasing levels of economic growth in the so-called Asian Tigers (South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan) raised questions about the cohesiveness of the 'Third World' project (Harris 1986; Holm 1990; Prashad 2012). At the end of the Cold War, the cleavages between the richest and poorest countries seemed as entrenched as ever before, while the group of so-called newly industrialised countries – not only the 'Asian Tigers' but also large 'developing countries' such as China, India and Brazil – had embarked on trajectories of significant levels of economic growth (Harris 2005; Armijo 2007).

In the early 2000s, larger audiences in the "Western-Northern world" (Mystri 2001, 13) began to engage with the implications of these shifts. Against the backdrop of a growing consensus in both academic and policy circles that the various spheres of world politics were moving towards increasingly "multipolar" or "multiplex" setups (Amin 2013; Acharya 2014) a lively debate unfolded about the role of so-called "new" (Zürn and Stephen 2010), "emerging" (Cooper and Flemes 2013) or "rising" (Hart and Jones 2010) powers (Gabas and Losch 2008; Jaffrelot 2009; Gray and Murphy 2013; Weiss and Abdenur 2014; see Nolte 2010). Across international fields, the current version of the 'rising' or 'emerging' power labels has been understood to refer to countries formerly (or still) classified as 'developing' in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), whose economic and political clout has increased significantly over the last 15 years and who have been evolving in a "historic position outside, or on the margins" of the 'Western-Northern' world (Hurrell 2006, 3). The concept of 'rising powers' is a relational one – attempting to classify countries in relation to others where the 'rising' refers to a movement from a position of relative weakness to a position of relative strength or influence in economic or political terms (see Paes et al. 2017; Haug 2018). Debates have centred on

whether the ways in which these 'rising powers' engage with world politics follow the logic of confrontation, contestation, cooperation or convergence, and on whether they reproduce or unsettle existing international hierarchies (Cooper 2013; Stephen 2014; Li and Carey 2014; see Paes et al. 2017).

In international development politics, the impact these players have had on broader patterns of interaction has been discussed with reference to the "rise of the South" (UNDP 2013a) and the growing clout of providers outside the DAC (Woods 2008; Mawdsley 2012; Li and Carey 2014). China, Brazil and India in particular have considerably increased their weight in international development over the last decade, and their positions within the field have changed significantly (Mawdsley 2012; Younis 2013; Gu et al. 2016). Embedded in more wide-reaching attempts to alter their standings and roles in world politics (see Larson et al. 2014; Larson and Sevchenko 2014), they have contradicted key expectations about how non-DAC countries were to engage. Under the umbrella of 'South-South' cooperation arrangements, they have not only expanded their engagement but have also claimed to introduce more horizontal elements, contributing to a wave of optimism about the potential of 'South-South' relations (UNDP 2013a; see Mawdsley 2012, 102; Constantine and Shankland 2017, 105f). References to the "tremendous force of solidarity" (G77 2003, para 2) among 'Southern' countries were also connected to hopes that recipient countries would get more space for choosing between providers and increase their weight in development partnerships (see Curtis 2013; Kragelund 2015; Mawdsley 2017a).

Some have argued that, over the last decade or so, international development has increasingly become a "battlefield" (Esteves and Assunção 2014; see Zoccal and Esteves 2018): China, Brazil, India and others "did not want to be 'brought in'" (Constantine and Shankland 2017, 109) to the established DAC-led structures. Instead, they have challenged the hegemony of DAC donors in terms of the relative significance of their material cooperation flows, their status as key players in the field as well as their power over the definition of what counts as development assistance and how it is to be designed and implemented (Mawdsley 2017a). One major attempt by the DAC of responding to the challenge from 'Southern providers' has been the setup of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). Coming out of a DAC engagement with questions of aid effectiveness through conferences in Paris (2005) and Accra (2008), the GPEDC – set up in Busan (2011) and co-hosted by the OECD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – has tried to offer a more inclusive

platform for a range of different stakeholders (Atwood 2012; GPEDC n.d.); so far with limited success (Bracho 2017; Constantine and Shankland 2017; Taggart forthcoming). In direct and more indirect ways, 'Southern providers' have thus contributed to calling into question a range of dominant binary constructions, most notably the defining dyad of international development: the divide between (Southern) 'recipients' and (Northern) 'donors' and thus the relevance of the DAC as the sole and legitimate reference club for the assignation of status (see Janus et al. 2014; Larson et al. 2014, 8). With the increasing engagement of China and other large middle-income countries in development cooperation processes abroad, the era of 21st century 'South-South' cooperation has been shaped by 'Southern' states claiming "legitimacy and credibility as agents of "development", formerly presumed to be the privilege of the advanced North" (Mawdsley 2019, 13).

While the "rise of the South" has been said to affect societies across the 'developing country' spectrum (UNDP 2013a), the expanding economic and political clout of large middle-income countries has also led to an increasingly visible divide *within* the 'South', as foreshadowed by earlier discussions about the heterogeneity within the 'Third World' (see Wallerstein 1976, 481; Harris 1986). The "capacity gap" (Hopewell 2015, 1141) between China, Brazil and India, on the one hand, and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) such as Malawi, Cambodia or Haiti, on the other, had long been substantial, but the last two decades have made differences all the more visible. While Chinese, Brazilian and Indian approaches to international development processes have been far from homogenous (Gu et al. 2016), some authors have suggested that a new binary has manifested itself within the South, that of First vs. Second South (Eyben and Savage 2013, 463), Power vs. Poor South (Acharya 2014, 654) or high-carbon vs. low-carbon South (Fuhr 2019, para 6). While most 'Poor South' countries have remained attached to the frame of recipients and still face considerable capacity challenges that prevent them from engaging more proactively with international development processes, large 'Southern providers' have been able to control increasing amounts of resources that are valued in the field (Hopewell 2015). In line with Brandt Line notions of North/South, they have been "more powerful than any former 'South', but at the same time considerably less 'Southern'" (Wagner 2017, 12). There has also been a certain convergence between DAC donors and major 'Southern' providers. Over the last decade, a range of 'Northern' donors have shown a more explicitly "self-interested" (Lewis 2019, 1970) approach to international development, arguably inspired by 'Southern' practices reminiscent of post-war notions of

development as modernisation with a focus on infrastructure, economic productivity or resource extraction (Mawdsley 2015; 2017b). Increasing levels of differentiation within the 'South' (meaning countries outside the World Bank high-income category) and concurrent signs of convergence between DAC donors and certain parts of the 'South' (notably large provider countries) have thus put another major question mark behind the meaning and relevance of the North/South binary for international development.

At the same time, across issue areas related to or affecting international development processes, North/South binaries still reflect empirical macro patterns, often stemming from centuries of deep-seated (post)colonial/imperial difference making. In terms of income-related wealth, for instance, disparities might have slightly reduced but cannot belie "the persistence of the North-South income divide" (Arrighi et al 2003; see Scott 2011; Milanovic 2016). Similar arguments have been put forward with regard to the foundations of legal systems (Berger forthcoming); the institution of citizenship (Boatca forthcoming); consumption patterns (Brand and Wissen 2018); export tariffs (World Bank 2019a, 224); the affective economies of remittances (Warnecke-Berger forthcoming); or cleavages in terms of how cities (are able to) engage with climate change programming and international cooperation schemes (Koch 2020). Some have even argued that "current levels of exploitation by the global North over the global South compare… with, if not supersede…, [those of] colonial times" (Ling 2016, 18).

Overall, insights from different strands of research suggest that the North/South binary has remained relevant for understanding at least some of the (aggregated) macro dynamics that affect international development processes. In many ways, the relations between 'donors' and 'recipients' are still shaped by "the continuing vulnerability" of 'Southern' countries and regions that "remain disproportionately subject to the interventions" of 'Northern' agents (Lewis 2019, 1971). By and large, the world's poorest countries – in Sub-Sahara Africa and South-East Asia – are still the same as thirty years ago (World Bank 2019b; see Haug forthcoming); and, accordingly, the composition of countries on the ODA recipient list or the UN list of LDCs has not changed much over the last decades (UNCTAD n.d.; UN-DESA 2019a). Substantial changes in absolute terms notwithstanding (UNDP 2013a; Rosling 2018; see Green 2010), certain underlying structural-relational dynamics – particularly beyond a few large middle-income countries spearheaded by China, Brazil and India – sit uneasily with the general notion of a 'rising South.'

In multilateral development debates, there have been institutional attempts to get rid of rhetorical references to the "anachronistic" (Weiss 2009, 278) North/South binary. Through Agenda 2030 and the universality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[2] the UN has suggested that "we are all developing countries now" (Raworth 2018, para 7; UN-DG 2016; see Harrison 2015; Horner 2019b). While this rhetorical push has arguably been intended more as an aspiration, it is noteworthy that instead of ushering multilateral debates into a more homogenous era, Agenda 2030 has actually contributed to increasing tensions along North/South fault lines. At the UN General Assembly, for instance, the G77 has been increasingly wary to make sure that the decades-long trajectory of the UN development pillar – traditionally the *de facto* prerogative of 'Southern' countries – is not replaced by Agenda 2030, something that most 'Northern' countries would like to see to make processes leaner and, as they argue, more effective (see Mminele 2015; Aboulatta 2018). Questions about how to finance development processes under the SDG umbrella have also been contentious, usually following well-known divides between large DAC donors and the 'South' (Muchhala 2015; see Haug forthcoming). This is also reflected in debates about international cooperation for climate change mitigation and calls for climate justice that, more than before, and now with an explicit anchoring in the UN development agenda, highlight 'Northern' responsibility vis-à-vis the 'South' (Giovetti 2019; Unigwe 2019; see Gosh 2009; Fuhr 2019). Multilaterally, North/South dynamics with their "opposing and anachronistic troupes of actors" have in many ways remained "remarkably fixed" (Weiss and Roy 2016, 1150).

Despite recent changes and obvious longer-term perturbations of binary assignations, the broad imaginaries of 'North' and 'South' have thus remained an important reference in international development politics. In some ways, they have even been imbued with additional meaning and an additional level of relevance: the 'South' has become more diverse and powerful and has been increasingly able to challenge 'Northern' agendas and institutions. The traditional dichotomy of 'South' and 'North' (encompassing donor/recipient or developed/developing dualities) now exists in parallel to and/or ambiguously overlaps with a 'Southern provider' vs. 'Northern donor' binary. North/South as reference and structuring device may have lost salience in specific spheres – particularly with regard to the complexity and diversity of development realities below and across national aggregates (see Permanyer

[2] Agenda 2030 puts forward the SDGs as "the world's best plan to build a better world for people and our planet by 2030" (UN 2019a, para1; see UN 2015); see also Kanie et al. 2014; Dugarova 2015.

and Smits 2018) – but in others it has become more pronounced and reflects power struggles over standards, meaning and material resources that hitherto appeared unthinkable. North/South frames – and with it the relevance of and implications for international development politics – are notably more central to public discussions than a couple of decades ago (Brand and Wissen 2018; Lessenich 2018). As Martin Müller (2018, 2) has put it:

> The distinction between a richer, powerful Global North and a poorer, less-powerful Global South is perhaps the most influential way of categorising the world and thinking about global difference today. That distinction has not just become a staple of academic research … [but] has also [entered] the standard vocabulary of scholars, activists and, increasingly, policy debates.

## 3. The stickiness of North/South

A brief forward look at the findings of my empirical research provides evidence about the extent to which North/South-related binaries – notwithstanding their widely accepted limitations – have remained an everyday reference in international development politics.[3] Between March 2016 and December 2017, I conducted 259 interviews with representatives from more than 25 governments and 30 different multilateral or non-governmental entities from countries on six continents that straddle all human development categories (*see Annex 1*).[4] I began interviews by asking how respondents perceived the larger context they were working in. While many interviewees highlighted the increasing complexity of actors, platforms and processes, 189 out of 259 explicitly used references to North/South – and all 259, without exception, used binary terminology reminiscent of North/South to make sense of current international development realities (*see Figure 1*). Even those who during interviews would be entirely comfortable to also contest these binaries used them in the first place to map the field they were talking about.

[3] For details on interviews and methodology, see Chapter 2.
[4] Most respondents did, however, belong to the 'global middle class'; see Haug 2019.

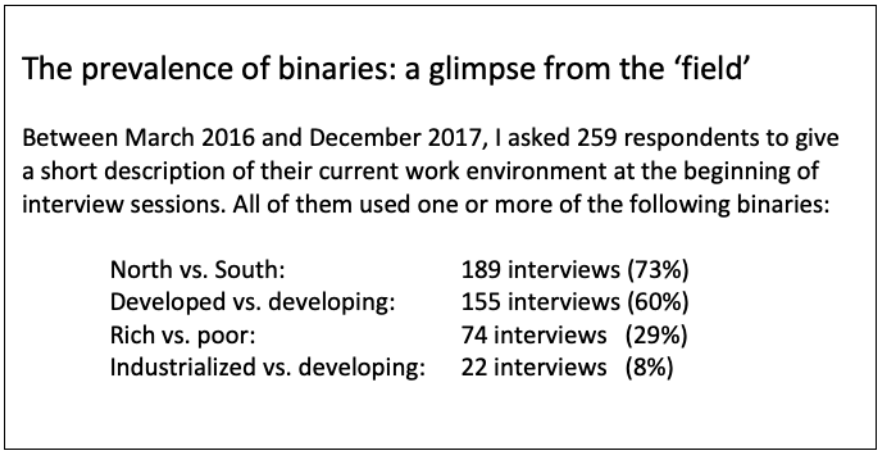


Figure 1 | Everyday use of binaries in international development politics

In the words of Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007), the North/South binary has proven to be "sticky" – it tells a simple (understandable), memorable and apparently appealing story (Miskimmon and O'Loughlin 2019; Zaffran 2019; see Gulrajani 2019). It evolves but is constantly reproduced and has developed a life of its own, permeating what with Pierre Bourdieu could be called the doxa of international development. Despite – or with Heath and Heath (2007) rather due to – the generalisations and simplistic imagery it contains, North/South has not only survived but remains a key logic for how the field of international development politics unfolds in study and practice. The different ways in which North/South frames can be used while centring on the notion of a fundamental opposition between different parts of the world, makes the binary adaptable to a variety of purposes. In its current usage, the 'South' can refer to a range of phenomena, including not only the poor and destitute parts of what was previously called the 'developing world' but also the increasingly vocal players from large economies outside the 'industrialised world' that reshape and reproduce international development relationships.

Among academics from or working in/on Africa, Asia or Latin America, references to the 'South' have also become part of an explicit strategy to unearth or develop alternative ways of analysing social realities (see Connell 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Santos 2014; Wagner 2017). Presenting oneself as part of the 'South' has also come with a considerable level of symbolic and political utility in multilateral circles, particularly in contexts like the GPEDC where 'Southern' voices have been important to ensure legitimacy (Abdenur and Fonseca 2013; Eyben and Savage 2013). Civil society activists, in turn, have used references to the 'South' to express their criticism against neoliberal globalisation and suggest alternative

ways of organizing transnational cooperation (see Prashad 2012; Mahler 2017; Tricontinental 2019). What unites all these uses of the 'South' is a mostly deliberate attempt to essentialise North/South in some ways in order to put forward a criticism of, and alternative to, the 'North' – the established, dominant, conservative and/or hegemonic forces that have traditionally shaped the study and practice of international development.

Irrespective of the specific terminology used – whether 'international' is replaced by 'global' development (Horner 2019a; Horner and Hulme 2019), for instance – a wide range of state agencies, multilateral bodies and non-governmental organisations have built their rationale on North/South-related binaries. The World Bank offers a prominent example. Initially set up to assist post-war Europe, for most of its existence the World Bank's mandate has focused on supporting "developing countries around the world" – notably in Africa, Asia and Latin America – to "reduce poverty and support development" (World Bank 2019c, para 1f). In the face of changing global development realities, and in line with the SDG commitment to universality, the World Bank's management decided in 2016 to stop using the developed/developing distinction in its world development indicators (Fantom et al. 2016; see Horner 2019b). The ways in which the World Bank has continued to frame its work and provide analysis, however, have remained attached to not only that underlying binary but also the exact same terminology (World Bank 2019d). The most recent World Development Report states that "developed countries are defined as high-income countries and developing countries as not high-income countries based on the World Bank's 2018 country classification" (World Bank 2019a, 20); and the report's analysis focuses on how these 'developing countries' – in opposition to 'developed countries' – can benefit from global value chains (World Bank 2019a). The stickiness of World Bank developing/developed classifications, in turn, has a palpable impact on the allocation of resources: the ODA recipient list issued by the DAC builds on World Bank income categories, with countries that "have exceeded the high-income threshold for three consecutive years" being removed (OECD 2019d, para 2). With recent calculations suggesting that DAC donors still provide more than 80 percent of development cooperation worldwide (Benn and Luijkx 2017), ODA has remained "the main source of financing for development aid" (OECD 2018b, para 1); and ODA can only be received by

countries classified as 'developing' in accordance with aggregated World Bank income figures.[5]

Through everyday practices and official institutional framings, and by serving as the subject of critique, the North/South binary (and other binary notions it stands for or encapsulates) has remained an engrained imaginary of international development politics. Obvious perturbations – particularly with regard to the heterogeneity within the 'South' or economic dynamics cutting across binary mappings – have not been enough to force its redundancy. In different ways, North/South is still reflected in how 'international development' is taught, thought and written about, how institutions structure their work and present their goals and achievements, how cooperation programmes are set up and implemented, and what kind of financial resources are available for what kind of purposes. An empirical investigation of North/South binaries thus resonates with attempts by multilateral institutions and bilateral agencies to make sense of the world and carve out space for themselves and their strategic alliances. It is relevant for the analytical understanding of international development politics for policy analysts and practitioners. And it comes at an important time for academia itself that with a general 'South' turn is facing an increasing plethora of teaching curricula, university chairs and research programmes that all refer to the 'Global South' and thus – explicitly or implicitly – take the North/South binary as a reference for the ways in which they produce and share knowledge about the world.

## 4. At odds with North/South: Mexico and Turkey

Against the backdrop of the contested but sticky North/South binary in international development politics, only a limited body of research has put an explicit focus on country realities that do not fit with either the traditionally dominant interest in major DAC donors or the increasingly diverse set of 'Southern' players. An exception has been scholarship on South Korea's evolving positionality (Kalinowski and Cho 2012; Kim et al. 2013; Kim 2017) and on

[5] For ongoing debates about how to complement or replace ODA, see Basharati 2017; Li 2019.

post-Soviet spaces (Elliott 2010; Gray 2011; Szent-Iványi 2012; Müller 2018).[6] Overall, however, country positionalities clearly at odds with the evolving grand imaginaries related to North/South have received little systematic attention. This is where Mexico and Turkey take centre stage. While quite distinct in terms of fundamental historical, political or socio-cultural features, Turkey and Mexico are linked by certain key characteristics that have provided the backdrop for their engagement with international development politics. Evren Çelik Wiltse (2015, 215) has argued that in both countries, variegated legacies of Empire – the Spanish in Mexico's and the Ottoman in Turkey's case – have contributed to "high degrees of stateness, strong central administrations and deep-rooted structures of state-society relations."[7] At the beginning of the 20th century, both Mexico (the former Spanish colony) and Turkey (the 'successor state' of the Ottoman Empire)[8] saw the establishment of "modern, secular and republican regimes" that for decades oversaw state-centric economies. In the 1980s, both countries opened up their engagement with global neoliberal capitalism to experience substantial economic growth that has had a palpable if unequal impact on different parts of society (Çelik Wiltse 2015; see Özel 2014; Sancak 2018); and both countries have continued to struggle with addressing poverty and subnational patterns of inequality (Alvarado 2008; Celebioğlu and Dall'erba 2010; Şeker and Jenkins 2015; Villanueva 2019).

In the wider economic and political geographies of their respective regional contexts, Mexico and Turkey also share specific sets of positionalities (Eder 2001). Both border economically poorer and institutionally more volatile regions – Central America in Mexico's case, and parts of the Middle East for Turkey. At the same time, they have economically and institutionally strong neighbours to the north – the US in the case of Mexico and the European Union (EU) in the case of Turkey; and both countries have been part of free trade schemes with these neighbours – Mexico through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), set to be replaced by the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (Petras 2018); and Turkey through a customs union and "effectively frozen" (European Commission 2019, para 5) membership accession negotiations with the EU. While divisions within the Western Hemisphere have thus been key for Mexico (see Wise 1998; Serrano 2014), in Turkey's case dynamics framed as unfolding between 'East' and 'West' have played a dominant role in relations with neighbouring regions,

[6] For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 6.
[7] According to Carina Johnson (2011), Europe's encounters with the newly conquered Mexicans and the expanding Ottomans in the 16th century conditioned the development of fixed notions of cultural superiority.
[8] On the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, see Öktem 2011.

including Europe (see Müftüler-Bac 2007; Morozov and Rumelili 2012; Aydın-Düzgit et al. forthcoming). What Porfirio Diaz, Mexican long-term dictator-president, allegedly said about his country – "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the US" (Carroll 2017, para 6) – somewhat resonates with Turkey's "love-hate relationship" (Villelabeitia 2009, para 1) with the EU as dominant neighbouring bloc.

In debates about shifting global patterns of power and wealth, Mexico and Turkey – as currently the 15th and 19th largest economies in the world in terms of nominal GDP, respectively (IMF 2019; World Bank 2019e; see Investopedia 2019a) – have often been put into a group of 'newly industrialised' or large middle-income countries led by China, India and Brazil that have experienced substantial economic growth since the 1990s and currently play visible and vocal roles in international fora (World Bank 2019f; Korzeniewicz 2012; Vom Hau et al. 2012; see Tansel 2019). Inclusion in the Group of 20 (G20) has arguably had a rather profound impact on Mexico and Turkey's standing in multilateral politics over the last decade. G20 membership has put both countries in line with Group of 7 (G7) members as well as the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) grouping, highlighting their "system affecting" (Keohane 1969, 295) relevance and thus their difference in standing vis-à-vis other players in their respective regions. Overall, their G20 membership has offered Mexico and Turkey a significant "status enhancement as members of a self-selected and exclusive top-tier club at the apex of the global hierarchy" (Cooper 2013, 971).

In terms of multilateral development spaces, however, Mexico and Turkey share a set of organisational membership patterns that are arguably less clear-cut than those of other G20 members (Haug 2017; Haug forthcoming). Unlike China, Brazil and India, they are members of the OECD and thus, institutionally speaking, closer to the core group of high-income economies; but unlike the US, Canada, Japan, Australia and Western European states they are not part of the DAC and thus occupy a marginal position with regard to 'Northern' donor countries.[9] At the same time, while both Mexico and Turkey participate in the broad spaces of 'South-South' cooperation, they are not part of the G77, unlike not only China, Brazil and India but also Argentina, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. Among the world's most influential states, they thus do not seem to fit with the institutionalised venues of either 'North' or 'South' (*see Figure 2*). I suggest that these "anomalous" (Gray 2015, 273)

[9] This also goes for almost all fields of socio-economic development where Mexico and Turkey regularly come last in OECD member state rankings; see, for example, OECD 2016e.

membership patterns make Mexico and Turkey what Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) calls "paradigmatic" cases: they can function as "exemplars" or "practical prototypes" highlighting more general characteristics of a broader set of phenomena (Flyvbjerg 2006, 232). With reference to the evolving stickiness of binary frames, the analysis of Mexican and Turkish realities might not only help to highlight and crystallise certain notions of North/South ambivalence in international development politics but also provide insights relevant for making sense of more general patterns that challenge established binaries (*see Chapter 6*).

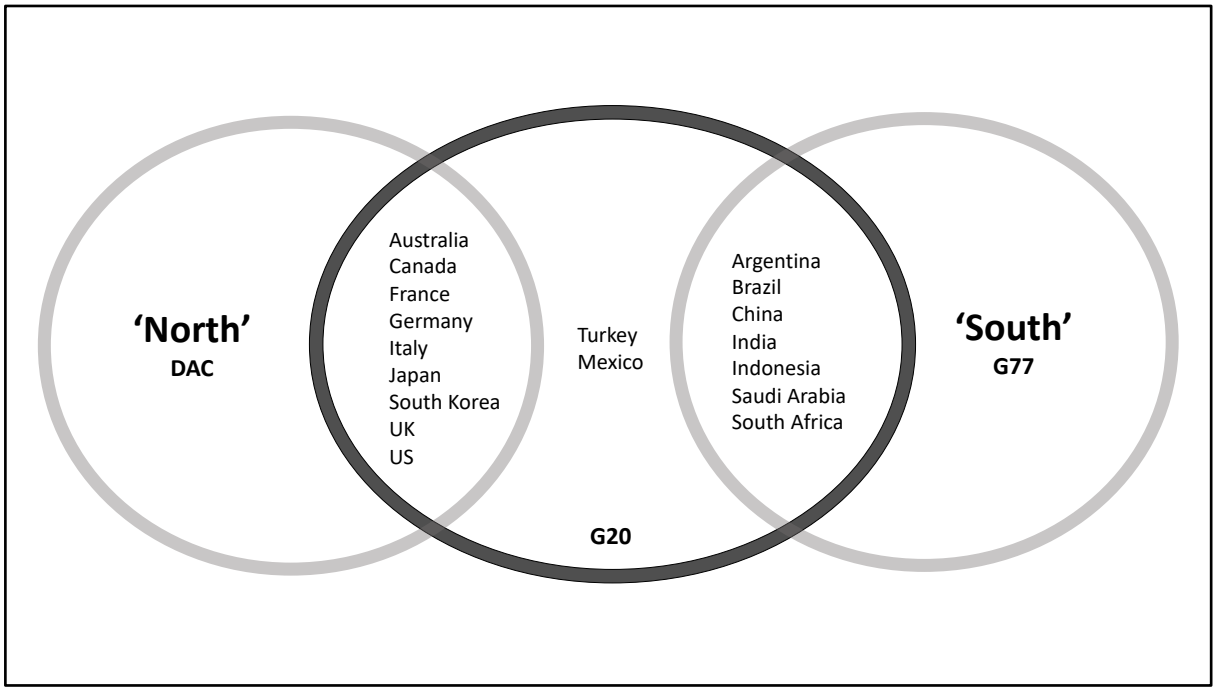


Figure 2 | Approximation of how G20 countries are institutionally positioned in international development politics, following the broad frames of 'North' (DAC membership) and 'South' (G77 membership)[10]

While there are a limited number of contributions comparing Mexico and Turkey as 'emerging markets' with similar domestic economic structures (Marois 2012; Onaran 2009; Özel 2014; Sancak 2018), I am not aware of any study that focuses specifically on Mexico and Turkey with regard to their multilateral development positionalities.[11] To a certain extent, selecting the cases of Mexico and Turkey for a joint discussion might still "surprise" (Anderson 2016, 18) – particularly in a field of academic inquiry like international development that has been used to a focus on DAC donors and, more recently, major 'Southern' providers like China, India and

[10] While Russia shares DAC/G77-related membership patterns with Mexico and Turkey, it epitomises the former 'Second World' or 'Other North' and thus occupies another set of positions at odds with established binaries (Wagner 2017; Müller 2018). For visualisations that include Russia, see Annex 2.5; see also Chapter 6.
[11] For studies on migration that compare Mexico and Turkey, see Cohen et al. 2005 and Martin 2012.

Brazil. As regional heavyweights at odds with North/South binaries but with an increasingly vocal approach to development-related issues of global concern, the selection of Mexico and Turkey in and of itself offers an alternative view on international development realities.

Against the backdrop of their growing economic and political clouts, Mexico and Turkey have institutionalised and expanded their development cooperation programmes over the last couple of decades. While both countries had repeatedly provided support abroad in the case of natural disasters or emergency situations well before the Second World War (TC-BDA 2016; Figueroa 2017), for the first post-war decades Mexico and Turkey were mainly at the receiving end of development assistance flows. With an ODA to Gross National Income (GNI) ratio always below 1.5 percent, however, both countries did never come close to situations of 'aid dependency' (OECD 2015); and in the late 1990s incoming ODA was at an all-time low (*see Annex 3*). In Turkey, under the leadership of Turgut Özal (Prime Minister 1983-1989, President 1989-1993) the first major development assistance programme for Sahel countries was set up in 1985; and as a response to the end of the Cold War, the Turkish government decided to create a separate development cooperation entity to expand engagement with Turkey's neighbouring regions. Established in 1992, what is currently called the *Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı* (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, TIKA) began to initiate operations in Central Asia and the Balkans, initially as part of the Foreign Ministry, then under the Prime Minister's Office and currently under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Overall, TIKA has been in charge of implementing Turkish development cooperation policy on the ground and reporting on Turkey's official assistance. Since the early 2000s, when the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party, AKP) under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Prime Minister 2003-2014, President since 2014) was first voted into power and began to more visibly challenge the traditional outlook of Turkish foreign policy towards the 'Western-Northern' world, TIKA's budget and activities have markedly expanded. While a substantial part of Turkish development assistance funds over the last decade has been spent on hosting Syrian nationals (*see Chapters 3 and 5; see Annex 3.2.3*), annual expenditure that directly reaches recipient countries has fluctuated around the mark of one billion US dollars (*see Annex 3.2.5*). The network of TIKA's currently 62 field offices spans across Central Asia, the Balkans, the Middle East, the African continent, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America, and is said to have facilitated assistance to more than 150 countries (TIKA 2019a; TIKA 2019f; *see Annex 2.7*).

In Mexico, the government of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) decided to expand its development-related support to countries in Central America and the Caribbean when Mexico's oil production increased in the 1970s. This led to the *Acuerdo de San José* [San José Accord], a joint commitment with the Venezuelan government to provide affordable oil to some of their poorer neighbours (Figueroa 2014, 2017); and in 1988 development cooperation was officially enshrined in the Mexican constitution as a key principle of Mexico's foreign policy (EUM-SG 1988). However, with the economic and financial turbulences in the 1980s and the formal shift towards the US, including the setup of NAFTA in the early 1990s, development assistance to neighbours in the south never made it to the top of the political agenda. Attempts of institutionalising Mexico's development cooperation in the 1990s were, overall, met with limited enthusiasm. The *Instituto Mexicano de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (Mexican Institute for International Development Cooperation, IMEXCI) at the Foreign Ministry was a first attempt but lasted only for a couple of years (1998-2000) until elections brought the 70 years of uninterrupted PRI reign to an end. It took until 2011 that the International Development Cooperation Act was passed, providing a legal framework for development cooperation and establishing the *Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation, AMEXCID). Two years later, the PRI came back to power, and so it was under President Enrique Peña Neto (2013-2018) that a new international development cooperation programme began to take shape. AMEXCID has been in charge of coordinating and monitoring both incoming and outgoing assistance flows. Large parts of the roughly 300 million US dollars reported as Mexico's international development cooperation in 2017 went to international organisations as assessed contributions, while just above ten percent were spent on AMEXCID's operational costs as well as bilateral or regional assistance programmes (*see Annex 3.1.2*). AMEXCID has been involved in cooperation initiatives beyond the Americas, but the geographical focus of Mexico's development cooperation has been directed at Central America and the Caribbean (*see Annex 2.6*).

While their organisational membership patterns in international development politics are similar, Mexican and Turkish approaches to development cooperation have thus been characterized by different trajectories. In Mexico, the overwhelming bilateral foreign policy focus on the US has meant that relations with other parts of the world – particularly its southern neighbours and *de facto* Latin America as a whole – have been relegated to second

place (Chabat 1993; González and Velázquez 2013). Against this backdrop, the institutionalised approach to development cooperation has been a more recent phenomenon, whereas engagement with multilateral fora – where the dominance of the US is felt less than in bilateral affairs – has traditionally been key for Mexican foreign policy (see Serrano 2014; González et al. 2015). In Turkey, in turn, under the AKP the traditional focus on the EU has been complemented – or gradually replaced – by growing levels of engagement with neighbouring regions to the south and east, and other parts of the world more generally (Öniş and Yılmaz 2009; Donelli and Gonzalez 2018). Development cooperation has been a central tool for this outreach. TIKA has grown substantially as an organisation; and it has played an increasingly visible role abroad, often contributing to laying the foundation for expanding Turkey's bilateral relations more generally (Umut 2016; Sazak and Woods 2017; *see Chapters 4 and 5*).

A review of relevant literature shows that there is a substantial body of work (mostly in Spanish) on Mexico's foreign policy and multilateral engagement (Pellicer 2013; Gómez Bruera 2015; González et al. 2015; González and Pellicer 2015; Maihold 2016; Covarrubias 2017). Since the setup of AMEXCID, Mexico's role in development cooperation and international development politics has received increasing levels of attention, not only by policy analysts (Lätt 2011; White 2011) and Mexican academics (Prado 2014; Prado 2015; Villanueva 2017; Villanueva and López 2017; Prado 2018) but also by government officials (Tripp and Vega 2011; Figueroa 2014; Valle et al. 2015; Figueroa 2017) and those who have straddled both worlds (Bracho 2015; Bracho 2017; Cortés 2016; Villanueva and Vega 2019).[12] Scholarship on Turkey's expanding development cooperation has arguably been even more prolific, evidenced through English-language publications by TIKA officials (Fidan and Nurdun 2008; Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010; Özkan 2013; Umut 2016; Özkan 2017) as well as academics (Apaydın 2012; Oğuzlu and Parlar Dal 2013; Gürzel 2014; Haşimi 2014; Hausmann 2014; İpek 2015; Sucuoğlu and Stearns 2016; Sazak and Woods 2017; Arda 2018; Donelli and Gonzalez 2018).[13] For both Mexico and Turkey separately, however, few studies have provided in-depth accounts linking development cooperation and multilateral engagement. Most existing

[12] Most contributions have been published in Spanish; for exceptions see contributions (co-)authored by Gerardo Bracho and Rebecka Villanueva; see also Gómez Bruera 2015.

[13] Turkish academics I talked to suggested that the reason for the clear bias towards English-language scholarship was the "outward looking" nature of the topic, with Turkey-based scholars eager to engage audiences abroad (Int-N-17; Int-N-22).

contributions provide single country case studies and, if at all, spend little space on comparing findings with insights from other spaces and/or linking them to broader patterns of engagement.[14]

Against this backdrop, I take North/South and related binaries as a starting and reference point to expand the understanding of Turkish and Mexican ways of engaging with international development politics. More specifically, I examine how the Mexican and Turkish governments have positioned themselves and engaged with development-related multilateral processes at the UN and the OECD, regional platforms, as well as multilateral and bilateral development cooperation schemes; and how they have been perceived by others.[15] Building on existing literature, the analysis of Mexico and Turkey is thus set to provide insights into phenomena that so far, have not received systematic attention in the study of inter-governmental dynamics in international development processes.[16] What is more, a focus on Mexico and Turkey as "exemplars" is likely – through the "force of example" (Flyvbjerg 2006, 228) – to also point to more general dynamics at work in the field of international development politics.[17] The investigation of Mexico and Turkey as sets of actors and spaces at odds with North/South is set within the specific "problem-space" (Scott 1999, 8) outlined above: a particular historical juncture where the North/South binary – while often critiqued – has remained a key reference for international development politics; and where academic discussions about the changing nature and increasing levels of differentiation within the 'South' – and to a lesser extent also within the 'North' – have largely overlooked actors and spaces fundamentally at odds with the underlying binary as such.

[14] For an early contribution putting forward a systematic approach to a larger group of 'emerging countries' beyond the BRICs that unfortunately suffers from a limited and partial engagement with empirical evidence, see Vom Hau et al. 2012. For a more recent and rather problematic attempt that misinterprets key concepts and data, see Parlar Dal and Dipama 2019.

[15] At the UN, the focus has been directed at the General Assembly, the Secretariat and the Development System. While the Financing for Development agenda, World Bank data and interviews with World Bank and IMF representatives are included in the analysis, the sphere of international development finance as such – including the lending practices of international financial institutions – goes beyond the focus of this dissertation. For a discussion of the G20 Developing Working Group that is only briefly mentioned in this dissertation, see Villanueva and Vega 2019.

[16] I thus explicitly focus on state agencies and government-to-government relations, as they have been at the centre of the bilateral, trilateral and multilateral dynamics in the field of international development politics (see Esteves and Assunção 2014; cf. Gonzalez-Vicente 2019; see also Chapter 6).

[17] For a more detailed methodological discussion, see Chapter 2 (section 3).

# Chapter 2.

## Studying that which does not fit

Phenomena that do not 'fit' with binary lenses of mainstream concepts and categories tend to remain "elusive" (Fawcett 2016, 722). One way of dealing with this elusiveness is to devise a conceptual frame to try to 'capture' them through the assignation of a label, connected with an explicit or implicit claim that this label somewhat accurately depicts (key elements of) what these phenomena are about, and that it does so in a more accurate or helpful way than other existing labels. In writings on geopolitics and international relations there have been various attempts to conceptually grasp the positionalities or collective experiences of countries that do not fit with the otherwise dominant focus on the most or least powerful. While research on international hierarchies has had a tendency to focus either on those at the 'top' or the 'bottom' (Ayoob 1989; Dunne 2003; Lake 2009; see Zarakol 2017a), there have been a range of conceptual attempts to make sense of "that which does not fit" (Zukav 2001 [1979], Ch1, para 1) with major international binaries of super- and subordination. World systems theory, for instance, popularized the notion of semi-periphery in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly with regard to economic production and the global division of labour (Wallerstein 1976; Arrighi 1985; see Cohen and Clarkson 2004; Amar 2013, 27). Immanuel Wallerstein explicitly included Mexico and Turkey – or rather their bourgeois classes (see Wallerstein 1988, 106) – in this group of semi-peripheral countries falling between the high-profit core and the low-profit periphery and argued that they had a particularly pronounced ability "to take advantage of the flexibilities offered by the downturns of economic activity" (Wallerstein 1976, 463f). More recently, Paul Amar (2013, 20) has argued that semi-peripheral agents in Latin America and the Middle East "leverage agency by alternating between collaborating with and mobilizing against hegemonic order" – and it is this eclectic engagement with components of the existing dominant setup that, for Amar, highlights "the uniqueness of the semiperiphery" (27). Ayşe Zarakol (2011; 2012), in turn, has drawn on the concept of semi-periphery in combination with the 19th century notion of "semi-civilization" (Zarakol 2012, 8) to discuss how the withholding of full recognition by dominant European powers assigned entities like

the Japanese, Ottoman or Thai Empires a position as "insider-but-outsider" (Zarakol 2011, 195), somewhere between the 'civilised' core and the 'barbarian' periphery.[18]

With a strong essentialising leaning and significantly different from world systems approaches in analytical and ideological terms (Said 2001; Orsi 2018), Samuel Huntington's (1993) influential and widely criticised work on civilisations also includes a conceptual engagement with states somewhat at odds with the civilizational boundaries he identifies. For Huntington, Mexico and Turkey are prime examples of 'torn countries' that either do not fit adequately with a given civilizational space and/or try to move from one civilization to another (see Alker 1995; Kösebalaban 2008; Serrano 2014). In a similar vein, Mexico and Turkey are part of Thomas Barnett's (2014[2003]; 209f) group of "seam states" located along what Barnett – by creating yet another problematic binary – has referred to as the "bloody boundaries" of the world's "functioning core" (basically the 'Western-Northern' world) and the "non-integrating gap" (see Roberts et al. 2003).

The concept of "middle powers" (Cooper at al. 1993; Cooper 1997; Jordaan 2003; Cooper 2013; Stephen 2013; Kim 2016; Cooper and Parlar Dal 2016; see Keohane 1969), in turn, has directed attention to actors and spaces that are "neither great nor small" (Jordaan 2003, 165) and located in the "distinctive middle segment of countries" (Cooper 2013, 966). Closely related to and sometimes overlapping with debates about concepts such as regional powers (Nolte 2010), network powers (Flemes 2013) or constructive powers (Schiavon and Domínguez 2016), analysts concerned with the middle segment of the international system have made the case that expanding the focus of analysis beyond a small number of great or super-powers is key for understanding world politics (see Shin 2016). Work on middle powers has focused on capabilities, substantive policy inclinations or inherent behaviour traits (Jordaan 2003, 165) as well as their 'niche' engagement (Cooper 1997) – where second-tier countries focus resources in specific policy fields to exercise "issue-specific forms of policy leadership" (Cooper 2013, 963; see Paes et al. 2017; Ravenhill 2018). Since the turn of the millennium, and following the initial wave of engagement with China, Brazil, India and the BRIC(S) as a grouping, Mexico and/or Turkey have been part of different clusters defined by analysts in the banking sector to capture the 'emerging middle' in global economic affairs "beyond the BRICs" (vom Hau et al. 2012, 188) – such as CIVETS, Next 11, MIKT or MINT

[18] On that distinction see Casas-Klausen 2016; see also Hobson and Sharman 2005; Aydın-Düzgit et al. forthcoming. On Mexico as semi-civilised space, see Gallatin 1845.

(Cooper and Flemes 2013, 956f; Schiavon and Domínguez 2016). In academic circles, the growing interest in "emerging middle powers" (Jordaan 2003; Jordaan 2017) or "key non-traditional middle power[s]" (Cooper 2013, 971) has coincided with and integrated the broader literature on 'rising powers', including with regard to international development (Huelsz 2009; Kalinowski and Cho 2012; Kim 2017).

Another more recent contribution to the expanding conceptual focus on that which does not fit with the established binaries of international hierarchical spaces has been the notion of cusp state (Herzog and Robins 2014). Philip Robins (2014) defines cusp states as those "straddling" or "gravitational" countries (20) that lie "uneasily on the political and/or normative edge of what is widely believed to be an established region" (8). With regard to a given regional formation, a cusp state is thus not really an insider nor an outsider. Here, in-betweenness does not primarily refer to a state's size or power capacities but to its proximity to or distance from the core of a regional grouping. As with more recent discussions about 'emerging middle powers', the few existing contributions that take up the cusp state concept include detailed discussions of Mexico (Serrano 2014) and particularly Turkey (Altunışık 2014; Herzog 2014; Robins 2014).

As Erszebet Strausz (2018) has argued as part of discussions on how to expand the ways in which academic knowledge formation unfolds, doing research on international politics differently can include the acknowledgement that the categories and concepts we engage with have as much to do with ourselves as subjects of thinking and writing as with the phenomena we study.[19] Strausz suggests that the process of exploring conceptual approaches and attempting to formulate an argument is at least as important as the written end product. When I began exploring conceptual tools to approach Mexico and Turkey in international development politics, it seemed likely that, depending on the issue at hand, notions of semi-periphery, (rising) middle power or cusp state could serve as frames to address phenomena falling between categories in international development settings. In one way or another, the conceptual approaches mentioned above were all attempts to make sense of those positioned at the interstice, the seam, the border, the boundary, the edge, the margin, the rim, the verge or the brim of categories, somewhere in or close to the gaps between the established binaries (frequently employed for the analysis) of international politics – centre/periphery,

[19] For a more detailed discussion of my positionality in the framework of this dissertation project, see section 3; see also Haug 2019.

great/small, core/gap, inside/outside. The initial empirical evidence I had gathered about Mexican and Turkish engagement dynamics in international development politics, however, did not fall neatly in line with questions about cusp-ness, torn-ness or middle power positions between weaker and stronger states. Instead of trying to find the right conceptual label (see vom Hau et al. 2012, 189), I began to look for a more open-ended approach that would take Mexico and Turkey's empirical misfit with the North/South binary as a starting and reference point.

## 1. From liminality to *Thirding*

It was a few months into my PhD journey that I encountered the concept of liminality via its application to the study of international relations (Neumann 2012; Rumelili 2012; Stoicescu 2012; see Zarakol 2015). Liminality seemed to have all that was needed for a useful and productive framing of my research: hailed as a potential "master concept in the wider social and political sciences" (Thomassen 2015, 39) it was not only *en vogue* (see Horvath et al. 2015) but also seemed to provide a useful conceptual reference for my discussion of experiences somewhere between 'North' and 'South' (Haug 2016b). The term liminality builds on the Latin word for border (limes, limites; see Neumann 2012, 473) and was coined by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his work on rites of passage (Thomassen 2018; Horvath et al. 2015). Van Gennep (1909, 21) was interested in phases of rituals, and he referred to those "executed during the transitional stage [as] liminal (or threshold) rites." Building on van Gennep's work, Victor Turner (1969, 95) defined liminality as the condition of being "betwixt and between," as neither here nor there in the ritual passages of life (Thomassen 2018, 77f). Following van Gennep and Turner, the liminal phase of a social experience is one where previously unquestioned rules and truths are losing their taken-for-granted characteristics, and where the very foundation of individual and collective existence can be challenged.[20] With reference to the origins of the concept, liminality is most fundamentally about border or threshold moments and thus provides a useful tool to make sense of moments of transition. While

[20] For similar dynamics in the formation of scientific knowledge, see Kuhn 1962; Naughton 2012.

liminality has a spatial dimension – thresholds are some-where and threshold experiences take place in specific settings (Neumann 2012; Rumelili 2012; Stoicescu 2012; Thomassen 2018) – it has a strong temporal leaning (Szakolczai 2015). Van Gennep's focus on rites of passage and Turner's engagement with rituals provide insights into how social structures and positionalities are dissolved or suspended in the process of change. As Bjorn Thomassen (2018, 15) has argued:

> any application of liminality must, as a minimum, stay close to one aspect of its original meaning …: namely, that it has to do with the passing of a threshold and therefore with transition. If it is not about transition, it is not about liminality.

While there might be convincing arguments to move beyond the original meaning of a given term – suggesting that, in theory, liminality can be used in many different ways – Thomassen's insistence underlines a more general point: that the added value of concepts for inter-subjective understanding comes with notions of shared meaning that open up alternative ways of approaching the world.

During my initial writing process, however, it was this 'added value' that did not seem to materialize. My rather detailed engagement with liminality literature had remained somewhat divorced from the analysis of and engagement with my empirical material. While Mexican and Turkish engagement patterns contained certain threshold situations or inter-category movements, they were not *per se* and not exclusively about moments of transition but rather about long-term evolving positionalities that in different ways had remained at odds with evolving notions of North/South. The primarily temporal dimension of liminality connected to notions of transition resonated with ongoing transformations in the field of international development politics at large (*see Chapter 6*) but did not seem at the centre of Mexican and Turkish realities under investigation. To put it bluntly, in my project liminality had become little more than a neat way of referring to the in-between, without providing any clear tools for analysing the phenomena I was interested in. And the notion of the in-between itself – reflected in the concepts of semi-periphery, middle power and cusp state discussed above – focused only on one specific set of issues of what it meant to be 'at odds' (namely the experience of being *between* poles or categories) but seemed unable to account for other potential ways of not fitting, such as the simultaneity of *both* or the alternative of *beyond*. Liminality, and with it the in-between, did not seem able to conceptually capture the Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns in international development that I was

interested in. And so I let loose and briefly faced the void of what with Hannah Arendt (2018) can be called "thinking without a bannister" – the experience of leaving previously central concepts behind and facing the challenge of engaging with alternative ways of exploring the suspension bridges, railings and staircases of understanding.

In this – indeed liminal – moment it was my encounter with a deceased spatial theorist that offered a new set of bars to construct a different kind of conceptual pillar. Through Johanna Chovanec's piece on Marlen Haushofer's 'Die Wand' (Chovanec 2016) I discovered the work of Edward Soja. As a proponent of the spatial turn in the social sciences (Lefebvre 1996[1974]; Soja 1996; Massey 2005), one of Soja's (1996) major contributions – *Thirdspace* – centres on the notion of *Thirding* as a general challenge to entrenched ontological and epistemological binaries (see Soja 2002; Bustin 2011; Chovanec 2016; Haug forthcoming). While the term 'Thirding' has been employed informally to refer to the disruption of an otherwise harmonious duality – such as that of a romantic couple – where a 'third wheel' contributes to social awkwardness (Urban Dictionary 2011, para 7; McGlynn 2017), Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) has argued that adding a 'third' element to a dual constellation can lead to a more general unsettling of established structures. Thirding thus takes its starting point in questions about "another possibility" (Barker and Iantaffi 2019, 369; Henderson 2019). Its basic notion of identifying alternative approaches to social reality is reflected in discussions about Third Ways (Giddens 1998; Hildebrand and Martell 2012) or Third Spaces (Bhabha 1994) that explore potential beyond assignations of political left and right or (post)colonial super- and subordination. Lefebvre's *Tableau des Triades (associées)* provides concrete examples for what adding a third element to binaries can look like: 'mediation' is added to 'centrality' and 'periphery', or the duality of 'subject' and 'object' is complemented by 'unity'.[21] Building on Lefebvre, Soja (1996; 2002) refers to this move as 'Thirding-as-Othering' where additional elements are brought in to challenge existing knowledge and established limits.

While facilitated through and motivated by a focus on phenomena at odds with binary structures, however, Thirding goes beyond the idea of simply adding a third option. As Soja (1996, 61) puts it, Thirding "is not meant to stop at three" and does not refer to the setup of a "holy trinity" where the complementarity of two is replaced by the rigidity of three – such as the Roman *omne trium perfectum* [all that comes in threes is perfect], Christianity's triad

[21] For a translation of Lefebvre's tableau, see Soja 1996, 70.

of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or the *Aufheben* [sublation] of Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis (Kärkkäinen 2004; Elbow 1993; see Murrani 2016, 193). Soja's integration of the Third does not sit on what Peter Elbow (1993, 51) has referred to as a "Hegelian bulldozer," ready to eliminate diversity and difference. Instead, it is more closely related to Homi Bhabha's (1990, 211) emphasis on spaces that fall between or outside given frameworks and thus give "rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable." Soja explicitly draws on Bhabha and Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *Chicana* approach to the mixing and merging of borderlands in order to "continuously expand the production of knowledge beyond what is presently known" (Soja 1996, 61).[22]

Following Soja (1996, 11), Thirding is to be thought of as a tool for critical exchange and openness and thus a contribution to "the creation of another mode of thinking." Beyond notions of 'third options', it is the deconstruction of binary oppositions – the creation of "Unordnung" in categorical dualist thinking, as Chovanec (2016, 21f) puts it – that lies at the heart of Thirding. In the face of binaries, Thirding is an invitation to identify other locations and vantage points from which to examine the world where "neither site, role, or representation holds sway" (Routledge, 1996, 400) and explore alternative approaches to and positionalities in structured social space. This is where Thirding overlaps and joins hands with 'queering'. Queer studies engage with, most literally, 'that which does not fit' – with the "non-conforming" (Tiehl 2018, para 3). As Lauren Wilcox (2014, 612) has argued, queering "is not necessarily limited to theorizing sexual identities/identifications" but instead, in the words of Ilan Kapoor (2015, 1611), points to more general notions of upsetting dominant standards and "disrupting … the status quo." Where the in-between refers to middling positionalities and liminality puts a focus on transition, queer studies explicitly point to that which lies beyond dominant categories (Barker and Iantaffi 2019; Henderson 2019). It is this non-conformity of queering (Butler 1993, 228; Wilcox 2014, 612; Mawdsley 2019) that is also contained in Thirding; and while queering has an important primary link to questions of gender and sexuality, Thirding puts a focus on how to deal with binaries and non-conformist phenomena in the engagement with social realities more broadly.

[22] For further explorations of Thirding-related elements in different cultural traditions, see Marriott 1989; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012.

## 2. The *Thirding Lens*: Either/Or, Both/And and Neither/Nor

The conceptual framework I put forward for examining Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patters builds on this notion of Thirding. While Soja's writing is highly exploratory and often abstract,[23] I suggest combining his commitment to 'another mode of thinking' with a framework that provides a more tangible approach to empirical inquiry. Inspired by insights from queer studies and feminist writings (Johnson 1984; Cockburn 2000; Hyndman 2003; Germon 2008; Barker and Iantaffi 2019), including those applied to questions of international cooperation (Weber 2014; Wilcox 2014; Kapoor 2015; Mawdsley 2019), I develop a more substantially analytical approach to Thirding that combines three interrelated but distinct logics for the analysis of phenomena that do not fit with binary settings: Either/Or, Both/And, and Neither/Nor.[24] The perspectives stemming from these logics unfold with reference to binary poles and deal with them in different ways. Taken together, they form what I suggest calling a *Thirding Lens*. As a tool devised to redirect and sharpen attention – like a glass lens refracting light (Collins 2019h; Cool 2019) – the Thirding Lens offers a heuristic for investigating realities that do not fit with dominant binaries.

### Either/Or

The logic of Either/Or is the underlying pillar of all binary systems and captures the quintessential inclination towards separation, specialisation and order: entities and experiences are *either* one *or* the other; additional options are inexistent. The logic of Either/Or stands for "the compacting of meaning into a closed … opposition between two terms, concepts or elements" (Soja 1996, 60). While one of the first explicit reflections on Either/Or dynamics was put forward by Søren Kierkegaard's (1992 [1843]) account of the contrast between aesthetical and ethical conceptions of life, the deep-rooted 'closed' opposition between imagined poles – such as strong/weak, beautiful/ugly or rich/poor – has been a fundamental feature of the ways in which people across time and space have tried to

[23] Chovanec (2016) points to Soja's rather vague appraisal of Thirdspace/Thirding as a "purposefully tentative and flexible term" (Soja 1996, 2) that, by and large, aims to capture "thought processes that open up binary categories through a third element" (Chovanec 2016, 21).

[24] See Barbara Johnson (1984, 12f) for a brief reference to these three logics without any detailed discussion. See also Elbow (1993, 54f).

make sense of the worlds around them (Lloyd 1966; Elbow 1993; Levine 2016). According to insights from different fields of inquiry, a major reason for the popularity of Either/Or is that it offers a neat and simple presentation of reality that responds to deep-seated human needs, such as clarity, safety and belonging. As Lynette Russell (2005, 33) puts it in her work on historical identity analysis, "[d]ichotomies are reassuring – they categorise the world into a black and white comprehendible pseudo-reality, by simplifying and homogenising complexity, variability and uncertainty." In a similar line, Daniel Priestley (2015, para 4) holds that "[b]inary thinking feels safe" because it corresponds to the categories many people have become accustomed to use (see Thompson 2018). Hans Rosling (2018, Chapter 1, n.p.) even goes a step further, arguing that

> human beings have a strong dramatic instinct toward binary thinking, a basic urge to divide things into two distinct groups …. We love to dichotomize. … Dividing the world into two distinct sides is simple and intuitive, … and we do it without thinking, all the time.

While mutually exclusive binary oppositions are thus popular devices used to make sense of complexity, both consciously and unconsciously, positionalities and experiences at odds with these established dichotomies fall out of Either/Or. Their very existence unsettles what Edward Soja (1996, 60) refers to as "the lure of binarism." Faced with the challenge they pose to the underlying setup of binary systems, the logic of Either/Or reacts with attempts to reaffirm the mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness of binary poles and thus has an inherently conservative – system-maintaining – leaning. The (mostly implicit) assumption of an Either/Or perspective holds that the binary logic is both necessary and sufficient (Goertz 2006) for analysing questions of positionality and belonging in structured social space.

## Both/And

The binary thinking that Either/Or stands for has been explicitly attacked for producing unfair hierarchical assignations (Tickner 1992; Cockburn 2000; Enloe 2000; Hyndman 2003), dynamics of exclusion (Weber 2014; Wilcox 2014; Mawdsley 2019), as well as the inability to deal with multi-dimensionality (Wolfram 2015). Either/Or is accused of leading or contributing to problematic outcomes in terms of social policies, questions of identity or the general framing of choices (Thompson 2018; Barker and Iantaffi 2019). In particular, deconstructionist approaches have challenged the mostly implicit assumption that binaries are a basic structural fact of human existence (Johnson 1984; Cudden 2013; Turner 2016). What all these challenges

to Either/Or share is the insight that clear delineations between binary categories are largely artificial, and that social realities often do not keep up with the mutually exclusive nature of poles assumed by binary structures. The most visible and popular strand of these challenges can be summarised under the logic of Both/And. Contrary to the logic of Either/Or, Both/And holds that entities or people can actually be *both* one *and* the other. Attempts at thinking about and explicitly promoting Both/And approaches can be found across space and time, including but not limited to spheres of academic inquiry. In a 1927 article Wassily Kandinsky, for instance, argued that while Either/Or had been the dominant logic of (European) modernity, transformations were underway, pointing to new forms of order. These forms, according to Kandinsky, were to be characterised by 'And': a move away from separation and towards synthesis, illustrated by the colour purple as a combination of red and blue (Kandinsky 1946 [1912]). He predicted that "walls will fall" (Kandinsky 1955 [1927], 96) and underlined that the logic of 'And' would lead to a lot more chaos than the hitherto dominant Either/Or logic.

Building on this challenge to the Either/Or, Roland Barthes explored the in-between in his 1976 piece 'The Nectarine'. Barthes (1976, 107) was interested in

> what comes between the mark and the non-mark, this sort of buffer, damper, whose role is to muffle, to soften, to fluidify the semantic tick-tock, that metronome-like noise the paradigmatic alternative obsessively produces: yes/no, yes/no.

As a symbol of these transitional states between binary poles, Barthes (1976, 107) argued, the nectarine "damps the opposition of prune and peach" by combining elements of both. This notion of combination *à la nectarine* points to the concept of hybridity. A hybrid is understood as the product of "processes in which discrete social practices or structures, that existed in separate ways, combine to generate new structures, objects, and practices in which the preceding elements mix" (García-Canclini 2001, 7095). This mixture of elements of otherwise or previously distinct phenomena makes hybridity a quintessential expression of the Both/And logic (see Bhabha 1994). Cyborgs – the term itself a blend of 'cybernetic' and 'organism' (Clynes and Kline 1960) – are an often-cited case of hybridisation. The cyborg is partly human being and partly robot or, in Donna Haraway's (1991, 149) words, "a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction." Typical examples for how processes of hybridization have played out in social realities include discussions about

*mestizaje* in large parts of the Americas or spiritual syncretism in (post)colonial settings (Shaw and Stewart 1994; Miller 2004; Perez-Torres 2012).

While hybridity refers to the mixing of elements, queerness contains a notion of Both/And that rather stresses the idea of simultaneity. In Cynthia Weber's (2014, 596) words, being queer means to be "one thing *and* another." Twin Spirits in North American native communities, *muxes* in Zapotec culture as well as cross-dressing practices and transgender identities more generally – from *Khaniths* in Oman, *Fa'afafine* on Samoa and *Kathoey* in Thailand to *Burrnesha* in Albania or *Hijras* on the Indian sub-continent – contain or evolve around notions of Both/And (Bolich 2007; Schwarz 2017; Goldmann 2019). So does hermaphroditism (Germon 2008; Bourseul 2014), defined as "the condition of having both male and female reproductive organs" (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d., para 1) that can be found in historical sources from Babylonian myths to Prussian legal codices (Rolker 2015; Opinio Iuris 2019 [1794]; Goldmann 2019). In different ways, human beings referred to as 'intersex' (ISNA 2019; Germon 2008) as well as a wide range of plants and animals (Kebir et al. 2015) reflect Both/And notions and provide evidence that the neat male-female separation and assignations such as homo-, hetero- or bisexuality that build on it are (nothing but) powerful yet contingent social constructions (Oyewumi 1997; Bakare-Yusuf 2003; Germon 2008). Like hybridity, queerness does not follow the dual option presented by existing categories and instead includes the fundamental feature of And: by combining elements from otherwise separate phenomena, the logic of Both/And challenges and upsets the mutual exclusivity of Either/Or oppositions.

## Neither/Nor

The components the Both/And logic works with are limited to existing categories: the novelty provided by Both/And is produced through dissecting, connecting, mixing or rearranging the elements presented by Either/Or. This is where Nami Thompson (2018, para 12) – in her reflections on questions of belonging – argues that Both/And "feels incomplete … as it stops short of acknowledging the things we have no words for." This general point is reflected in Hortense Spillers's (1989) reading of 'mulatto-ness'. Spillers argues that the invention of 'mulatto' – the pejorative reference to a notion "created to provide a middle ground of latitude between 'black' and 'white'" (165) – provides a challenge to binaries that is connected

to yet considerably different from that of Both/And. Spillers holds that while the mulatto frame includes notions of being both white and black, it fundamentally highlights the "evasive and shadowy" nature of existence in social spaces where mulattos embody the "unspeakable" dimensions of alterity. This experience of double exclusion from arbitrary but powerful binary imageries is what Spillers refers to as "a neither/nor proposition" (166).

Like Both/And, Neither/Nor contains, in Lynette Russell's (2005, 33) words, "the (im)possibility of deciding between discrepant and often contradictory orders of meaning" and points to "correlates that are much greater than the sum of their constituent elements." While Both/And takes components from existing poles to mix or rearrange them, however, Neither/Nor focuses on phenomena that are considerably *different*. The 'undecidability' of Neither/Nor, in Russells' terms, contains a refusal to be (exclusively) limited to what existing categories have on offer (see Sturgis et al. 2012). This refusal is also reflected in notions of queerness and queering that go past the idea of 'being both and the other' (see above) and instead – or sometimes simultaneously – highlight the experience of deviance and difference that often accompanies "non-binary" intersex or transgender identities (Barker and Iantaffi 2019). More explicitly and forcefully than Both/And, the logic of Neither/Nor thus goes beyond the space defined by the boundaries of Either/Or. In Homi Bhabha's (2004 [1994], 2; see Soja 1996, 143) words, "there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond';" and it is this disorientating feature of Neither/Nor that points to "those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of … differences." Like Both/And, a Neither/Nor perspective operates with reference to established categories, but instead of combining them it focuses on elements and dynamics that exist outside the contours provided by the existing setup. A Neither/Nor perspective engages with what is otherwise classified as "unnameable" or "untranslatable" (Thompson 2018, para 25) because it lacks resemblance with what is already there.

## Applying the Thirding Lens

As binary frameworks and outlooks are sticky and difficult to escape, critical engagement with North/South dynamics in international development politics – as sophisticated or reflective as it might set out to be – always carries the risk of "falling back on binaries" (McDowall 2019, 202). With this in mind, the Thirding Lens does not avoid binaries but takes them as a starting

and reference point for examining social realities. The three logics outlined above address questions related to the purity (Either/Or), mutual exclusivity (Both/And) and exhaustiveness (Neither/Nor) of established binary categories. They provide three perspectives for the analytical engagement with phenomena at odds with established binaries and offer insights into specific versions of Thirding. Against the backdrop of a considerable list of concepts that have been used to grasp Mexican and Turkish specificities – such as semi-periphery, middle power, seam/torn/cusp state – the Thirding Lens does not aim at joining the "experimental reorganization and re-categorisation of states" (Robins 2014, 6) through labels but instead offers a more flexible and open-ended approach that focuses on the extent to which and how positionalities and engagement patterns coincide with, challenge or overcome dominant binaries. The Thirding Lens thus expands on and operationalises what Chovanec (2016, 23) has referred to as Soja's general thought model ("allgemeines Denkmodell").

Putting the proposition of each perspective of the Thirding Lens in slightly more abstract terms may help to highlight what the heuristic has to offer (*see Figure 2*). Against the backdrop of established binaries A and B, the Thirding Lens suggests investigating the positionalities, realities and experiences connected to a given entity X through three interrelated but distinct perspectives. First, the logic of Either/Or – assuming that X is either A or B – leads to questions about belonging to individual poles: can X be said to be part of A or B? To what extent, and how? Second, the logic of Both/And – positing that X could be both A and B – focuses on questions of simultaneity and combination: Does X simultaneously belong to or combine (elements of) A and B? To what extent and how does it do that? Third, the logic of Neither/Nor – suggesting that X could be neither A nor B – poses questions about distance and difference: Does X keep distance from, disrupt or go beyond (the space defined by) A and B? To what extent and how does it do that? Either/Or, Both/And and Neither/Nor are ideal types. As any ideal-type taxonomy, the three logics contain "differentiations that facilitate comparisons ... because a thing is best understood via contrasts with the available alternatives" (Lichbach 2003, 16). As constituent parts of the Thirding Lens, the three logics themselves are not meant as necessarily exhaustive or mutual exclusive approaches but rather offer a heuristic – a thinking tool, in Anna Leander's (2002) words – to analytically deal with phenomena at odds with dominant binaries.

| | Logic | Analytical perspective |
|---|---|---|
| Either/Or | X is either A or B. | (To what extent and how) Can X be said to be part of either A or B? |
| Both/And | X is both A and B. | (To what extent and how) Does X simultaneously belong to or combine elements of both A and B? |
| Neither/Nor | X is neither A nor B. | (To what extent and how) Does X keep distance from, disrupt or go beyond A and B? |

Figure 3 | The Thirding Lens: logics and analytical perspectives

Building on the initial discussion of North/South in international development politics (*see Chapter 1*), in the following chapters I apply the Thirding Lens to the investigation of Mexico and Turkey. As a tentative response to the secondary research question outlined in the Introduction – about how to approach Mexico and Turkey against the backdrop of the North/South binary – the Thirding Lens breaks down the primary research question – about Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns – into three distinct sub-questions:

> **Either/Or (Chapter 3)**: To what extent, and how, can Mexico and Turkey be said to be part of either 'North' or 'South'?
>
> **Both/And (Chapter 4)**: To what extent and how do Mexico and Turkey simultaneously belong to or combine (elements of) both 'North' and 'South'?
>
> **Neither/Nor (Chapter 5)**: To what extent and how do Mexico and Turkey keep distance from, disrupt or go beyond (the spaces defined by) 'North' and 'South'?

Each of these questions provides the guiding focus for Chapters 3, 4 and 5, respectively. While acknowledging and engaging with empirical complexity, I identify the particular ways in which the three perspectives of the Thirding Lens provide insights into how Mexico and Turkey are positioned in and engage with the field of international development politics.

# 3. Research design and research process

While this dissertation is driven by empirical observations of and conceptual reflections on international development and evolving North/South dynamics, it is embedded in broader assumptions about the constitution of social realities and the possibilities of and strategies for the production of knowledge. Edward Soja's work on Thirding has also been instructive in that regard. Soja (1996) combines an acknowledgement of the construction of realities through both material and ideational forces with a focus on the idiosyncratic ways in which existence is experienced. This points to parallels with John Dewey's pragmatist framework for inquiry that combines realist and idealist assumptions, positing that "the nature of the world" constrains experience while "our interpretations of our experiences", in turn, constrain our understanding of the world (Morgan 2014, 1048). Dewey's (1920 [2008]) focus on experiences joins Soja's emphasis on "real-and-imagined places" (1996, 11) as "fully lived" (2002, 113) space, asking for a detailed engagement with how empirical phenomena unfold at different sites and from different perspectives. Against this backdrop, this section sets the stage for the in-depth analysis of Mexican and Turkish realities by discussing the study's research design and the contours of the research process. I first introduce 'combined analysis' as the methodological framework, then turn to the methods I have used to gather and analyse empirical data and close with a brief discussion of how the key roles other people played during the research process have not only helped to overcome fieldwork challenges but also led to attempts to engage in what I refer to as 'mutual facilitation'.

## Methodological framework: a combined analysis

Methodology is a general approach or attitude towards a research project, centring on considerations of research objectives and ways to meet them (Gabriel 2011; Clough and Nutbrown 2012) – or *tout court*, "how inquiry should proceed" (Berryman 2019, 273). Embedded in general ontological and epistemological assumptions about the intersubjective constitution of the social world and the interpretive nature of social science research (Weber 2004; Flyvbjerg 2006; Gephart 2018), the objective of this dissertation is to understand and make sense of country realities at odds with North/South binaries through a *combined*

*analysis* of Mexico and Turkey in international development politics. References to "combined analysis" (Quilgars et al. 2009, 26) have been used in research that brings together insights from two or more qualitative case studies in order to address a broader set of phenomena.[25] For the combined analysis at the heart of this dissertation, the three perspectives of the Thirding Lens offer a general structure for analysis.[26] Instead of following two separate strands – one for Mexico and one for Turkey – followed by a concluding section that 'compares' the key elements of both cases, I have opted for an approach inspired by the Thirding Lens itself. Each of the three following chapters evolves around one of the Thirding Lens perspectives – Either/Or (Chapter 3), Both/And (Chapter 4) and Neither/Nor (Chapter 5) – while evidence from Mexico and Turkey is combined when discussing each in turn. Instead of setting out to identify specific labels that best fit Mexico and Turkey respectively, I thus use both cases as reservoirs for examining how engagement unfolds against the backdrop of the North/South binary. As "exemplars" (Flyvbjerg 2006, 219; see Kuhn 1987; Flyvbjerg 2001), the cases of Mexico and Turkey not only offer insights into idiosyncratic complexities but also provide steppingstones for reflecting on more general dynamics in international development politics (*see Chapter 6*).

By identifying commonalities and differences, the combined analysis of Mexico and Turkey also speaks to the fundamental insight that comparison is at the heart of how knowledge about the world is created (Anderson 2016; Stonehill 2019). No matter if through habit or inquiry, insights about specific phenomena are usually developed in relation or relative to something else, typically something one already knows (slightly) more about (Morgan 2014; see Clowes and Bromberg 2015; Ahram et al. 2018). According to Benedict Anderson (2016, 18), combining insights from more than one set of spaces is not only a methodology but also a "strategy" that allows for devising particularly relevant accounts. Through connecting different sites of research, comparative elements provide the foundation for

> a research design of juxtaposition in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something monolithic or external to them (Marcus 1995, 102).

[25] For other work using the term 'combined analysis', see Rohlfing 2016; Posset et al. 2019.
[26] For structured and focused dimensions in comparative work, see George and Bennett (2005, 67).

In line with this, and rather than aiming for parsimony and neat generalizable findings, I engage with insights from and related to Mexico and Turkey to go beyond the particular by combining a commitment to depth with an interest in patterns.

## Methods: gathering and analysing data

The methodological decision to conduct a combined analysis of Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns led to a "multi-site fieldwork" (Marcus 1995, 100) design. Between March 2016 and December 2017, I spent time in New York City (four months overall), Mexico City (four months overall) as well as Ankara and Istanbul (five months overall) to immerse myself in Mexican and Turkish contexts, and expand my understanding of international development politics more generally. Across research sites, I used a range of qualitative methods – "specific tools or sets of instructions" (Berryman 2019, 274) for gathering and analysing empirical evidence – to access and make sense of data that would allow me to get an in-depth understanding of Mexico and Turkey in international development politics.

### *Gathering data: multi-site explorations*

While still in Cambridge, I began with conducting desk searches, online and offline, of Mexican and Turkish policy frameworks, such as national development plans and development cooperation strategies; official reports and programme summaries; website content; policy papers, negotiation proceedings and voting records of multilateral negotiations; speeches, statements and press releases.[27] I continued with the collection of documents throughout my fieldwork stays, but once I left Cambridge in September 2016 interviewing took centre stage. Understood as "conversations generative of situated, insider knowledge", as Vincent Pouliot (2013, 51) has put it, interviews "provide researchers with an efficient means to penetrate more or less alien life-worlds." Interviews were not only fundamental for engaging with "the meanings people attribute to their lives and the processes which operate in particular social

[27] I have mostly drawn on sources in English, Spanish and Turkish. Interviews were conducted in English, French, German or Spanish, depending on my respondents' preferences. Translations are my own. I have used double quotation marks ("…") for direct quotes and single quotation marks ('…') to highlight specific terms or phrases.

contexts" (Valentine 1997, 111) but also helped with obtaining information unavailable elsewhere, pointing me to questions and issues I had not been aware of before.

When I met interview participants for the first time, I would follow a semi-structured procedure (Wengraf 2001), with blocs of questions arranged according to the interviewee's profile that I prepared for each encounter separately. After clarifying questions of consent and the use of interview data, I would start off with asking them for a general account of how they perceived the larger context they were working in (*see Chapter 1*). As the vast majority of my respondents – in Turkey, almost everyone – requested confidentiality, I decided to use all interview material anonymously and provide details on interviewees' profiles and the circumstances of interviews separately.[28] Second encounters normally took place in less formalized settings. I would still prepare blocs of questions – often following up on previous exchanges – but followed the logic of narrative interviews (Lindseth and Norberg 2004) as I was more interested in providing space for in-depth accounts. With the officials I ended up spending more time with, our encounters evolved mostly into informal conversations, short chats between meetings or longer exchanges over lunch. At TIKA and particularly at AMEXCID I observed a wide range of everyday processes, participated in team meetings, attended in-house events and had access to internal documents. While I had not set out to conduct an ethnographic study in the traditional sense of the term, the in-depth engagement with officials and their work environment over several months included *de facto* ethnographic elements (Gusterson 2008; Schatz 2009).

The selection of interview partners was based on what Oisín Tansey (2007) has referred to as "purposive non-probability sampling": I got in touch with people based on their position in organisations relevant for my research and/or their subject-specific expertise. In Mexico and Turkey, I focused on officials working for government entities in charge of development-related processes. Most interviews and observations took place at the Foreign Ministry in Mexico City, as well as at TIKA, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Development in Ankara where I spent days in a row with different officials, some of whom I also met outside their workplace for longer and more informal conversations. In addition, I interviewed officials at the President's Office in Mexico, the Prime Minister's Office in Turkey, other ministries and government agencies as well as a range of representatives of non-governmental

[28] For a list of interviews including the codes I use for in-text citations, see Annex 1.

organisations, think tanks, universities and consultancy firms. This allowed me to get a detailed overview of the national contexts or "ecosystems" (Tsujimoto et al. 2018) of people and institutions engaged with questions related to international development processes. In New York City, I focused on the UN General Assembly (mostly the Second Committee), the UN Secretariat (such as the Department for Economic and Social Affairs) and different parts of the UN development system. I also interviewed officials from 25 UN member states as well as representatives from foundations, think tanks and civil society organisations working with UN bodies on development-related issues, again in order to better understand the context of multilateral development processes in and around the UN.

In addition to my main research sites, I interviewed OECD officials and analysts at OECD headquarters and member state representation offices in Paris. I also conducted telephone interviews with Mexican and Turkish diplomats based in Addis Ababa, Geneva and Vienna and – on my way from Cambridge to Istanbul – stopped in Budapest, Belgrade and Sofia to meet with journalists, bureaucrats and diplomats. As the result of an attempt to reduce my (already considerable) carbon footprint, this explorative 'train-journey method' allowed me to approach Turkey – and thus the research sites I initially knew least about – in a step-by-step process. I gathered an eclectic mix of insights into Turkish links with past and present realities across the Balkans – from the walls around the cathedral in Zagreb once built as protection against Ottoman invasion, or the Hungarian official who was all over Turkish television series, to the former Bulgarian diplomat who told me about recent tensions with the government in Ankara. More generally, wherever I went between 2016 and 2018, I reached out to bureaucrats, academics or journalists in order to better understand multilateral processes and get an idea of how Mexican and Turkish engagement with development-related processes was perceived abroad. Overall, a multi-site fieldwork design together with the strategic use of (generous) research funding and the (even more generous) support of people I met on the way allowed me to approach my research topic from different angles; engage with a wide range of perspectives and organisational contexts; and gather a wealth of data, mostly in the form of transcribed interview accounts, observation notes as well as other textual and visual material I was able to collect throughout the research processes.

*Analysing data: official narratives, audiences accounts and lived experiences*

While I had begun drafting short summary accounts of interviews during fieldwork in order to highlight key issues and keep track of patterns, the proper analysis took place when I was back in Cambridge. I began by arranging sources in three main clusters that provided a more systematic approach to the "interpretative act" (Saldana 2009, 4) of qualitative data analysis and allowed me to operationalise the concrete contours of Mexican and Turkish 'positionalities' and 'engagement patterns': official identity narratives, audience accounts and lived experiences. First, for the analysis of official Mexican and Turkish sources I drew on literature on narratives as constituent parts of collective processes (Smith 1981; Forst 2013), particularly work on the autobiographical components of state identity narratives (Wertsch 2000; Delehanty and Stelle 2009; Berenskoetter 2014). All publicly available government-sponsored sources – from development plans to policy strategies, statements or speeches – were taken into account, capturing the key plotlines of how the Mexican and Turkish governments had presented themselves in international development politics – who they were, how they related to others or how they engaged with the field at large. I first conducted an in-depth content analysis of all the textual evidence gathered, with coding frames (Cope 2010) that I had developed based on the initial desk reviews. As short phrases summarising data components, codes allowed me to structure 'raw' data and establish linkages between different themes, leading to comprehensive accounts of how official sources had presented Mexican and Turkish roles and identities, and how that had evolved over time.

Second, for the analysis of accounts from outside the Mexican and Turkish governments I drew on the notion of "audience" (Goffman 1956, 17f) as a key component of how collective selves unfold. As highlighted by research on international status (Larson et al. 2014; Wohlforth et al. 2017), a focus on audiences or reference communities – what Erik Ringmar (1996, 81) has referred to as "circles of recognition" – is key for analysing relative standing in social settings: how the broad group of stakeholders that matter in a field make sense of a given player's position or performance.[29] For identifying patterns of how Mexico and Turkey have been perceived and framed by international development audiences, I was able to draw on evidence from multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental sources, including 154 interviews

[29] Unlike research on international status, I do not primarily focus on 'rank' or 'prestige' (see Larson et al. 2014) with regard to one specific hierarchy (e.g. donorship, see Parlar Dal and Dipama 2019) but instead examine the many ways in which positions unfold relative to others in the field of international development politics.

with stakeholders outside the Mexican and Turkish governments (*see Annex 1*). For the analysis of interviews I began with *in vivo* coding (based on key terms used by respondents) and then focused on descriptive coding (based on my analytical frames) to identify patterns across sources (Cope 2010). Several cycles of re-categorising data allowed me to refine the analysis and identify general patterns of how Mexico and Turkey had been classified and perceived. While insights refer mostly to the particular period I conducted fieldwork in (March 2016 to December 2017), I was able to also draw on accounts that provided insights into the historical trajectory of external perceptions, such as classification exercises of multilateral organisations over time or analyses published by media outlets, universities or think tanks.

Third, I complemented the analysis of Mexican and Turkish government-sponsored narratives and a broad range of audience accounts with a focus on the lived experiences of those who were supposed to act on behalf of or embody Mexico and Turkey in international development politics. Insights from months-long observations and in-depth narrative interviews with public officials provided the empirical foundation for analysing subjective experiences (Lindseth and Norberg 2004; Highmore 2011). In line with the phenomenological tradition of lifeworld research (Husserl 1970 [1936]; Katz and Csordas 2003; McIntosh and Wright 2019), I not only coded data but also went through cycles of both holistic and detailed readings (Brown et al. 1989; Van Manen 1990) of the 105 interviews I had conducted with Mexican and Turkish officials. This in-depth engagement with a considerable number of individual perspectives allowed me to identify "clusters of commonality" and various intersecting patterns across accounts (McIntosh and Wright 2019, 459f). Direct quotes were chosen based on the extent to which they reflected general trends or epitomized specific dynamics. Taken together, the analysis of official identity narratives, audience accounts and lived experiences has provided a rich array of insights into the what, where and how of Mexican and Turkish positionalities – their evolving positions relative to others in the field – and their engagement patterns. Together, these insights have formed the basis for applying the three perspectives of the Thirding Lens – Either/Or, Both/And and Neither/Nor – in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

## From fieldwork challenges to mutual facilitation

From the outset, it had been obvious that the multi-site fieldwork I had set to out to conduct presented a range of challenges.[30] Across research spaces, I was mostly 'studying up' (Gusterson 1997), meaning that I engaged with people who, in a variety of ways, had a social standing generally perceived as superior to my own (e.g. based on experience, education or professional position). Most of my potential respondents were both 'experts' – possessing knowledge inaccessible to wider audiences – and 'elites', occupying a relatively privileged position in their social contexts (Littig 2009). Compared to research in non-expert/non-elite contexts, this made questions of access both easier and more difficult: it was mostly clear whom I needed to talk to and where people were to be found institutionally, but the 'elite' contexts – like ministries and diplomatic circles – in which my research was to take place were "by their very nature difficult to penetrate" (Hertz and Imber 1995, viii).

At the same time, my own positionality in spaces I was to conduct fieldwork in was set to condition and shape both research process and outcomes (Merriam et al. 2001; Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry 2004; Sultana 2007; Gould 2014; Muhammad et al. 2015). I was aware that my "ascribed characteristics" (Burgess 1991, 49) – what people assumed regarding my age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation or social class – would condition my interaction with respondents. As white, male, with a European passport, based at what Ananya Roy and others have called the 'global university' (Roy et al. 2016) and with a previous employment record at the UN, I was arguably predestined to be associated with what Lily Ling (2017) has referred to as the privileges of hypermasculine Eurocentric whiteness. While there are many more – and arguably more ambiguous – dimensions to who I am, some of these attributes were likely to be perceived as particularly characteristic when meeting respondents for the first time (Magee and Galinsky 2008, 355; see Fourie et al. 2019, 2f). While I was aware that interviews would be conditioned by how my research participants and I perceived each other (Glesne 1989, 46), it was unclear to me whether they would actually respond to my requests to meet for a conversation in the first place.

Additionally, across research sites I had to manoeuvre in substantially different contexts, also regarding the extent to which I was able to build on previous exposure. While I was familiar with Mexico City and Mexican development cooperation and had professionally engaged with

[30] Parts of this section are taken from or draw on Haug 2019.

UN processes in New York, during the first steps of the research project, Turkey was the great unknown. Prior to fieldwork I completed an introductory Turkish language course followed by roughly two months in Istanbul to immerse myself in language training and conduct preliminary interviews. My relative unfamiliarity with the Turkish context was exacerbated by the fact that a few weeks after I had received the formal permission to conduct fieldwork, a coup attempt by parts of the Turkish military shook Turkey, killing some 250 people and leading to the declaration of a state of emergency that would end up being extended multiple times until July 2018 (Shaheen 2018; see Zarakol 2016; Esen and Gümüşçü 2017). *15 Temmuz* (15th July) – the date of the coup attempt – quickly became a symbol for the AKP government's fight against 'Turkey's enemies' inside and outside the country, particularly those (suspected to be) associated with the Hizmet movement led by the cleric Fetullah Gülen, allegedly the head of what Turkish authorities have referred to as *Fethullahçı Terör Örgütü* [Fetullahist Terror Organisation] (Kalın 2016; see Kenyon 2018; Shaheen 2018; Taş 2018). According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, by the end of 2017 more than 100,000 (above all Kurdish) websites were to be blocked, 152,000 civil servants dismissed and almost 160,000 people arrested (UN-OHCHR 2018). When I set off for Istanbul in September 2016, large parts of Turkish society – including government ministries, non-governmental organisations and Turkish academia – thus found themselves in a "state of exception" (Gökarıksel and Türem 2019; see Glasman 2018). Most people I had spoken to about my plans to conduct fieldwork in Turkey were reluctant to provide encouraging advice; all highlighted that it would require extreme care, flexibility and readiness to change my plans in case research would prove unfeasible or dangerous.

A major factor contributing to the fact that, overall, the fieldwork turned out surprisingly well were the people I was fortunate enough to meet. To what extent, and how exactly, my 'ascribed characteristics' conditioned the level of access received and the kind of information gathered is difficult to tell. But they did have an impact. Contrary to my initial expectations, public officials in Ankara were very interested in talking about Turkish development cooperation and foreign policy. Once assured of their anonymity, most of them were also not shy to voice critical opinions about their government. "They felt safe with you", a Turkish academic told me later, "I mean, look at you. You don't belong to a political camp. You are from Europe. I probably wouldn't get that kind of access now" (Int-N-46). While some of my emails to Turkish bureaucrats remained unanswered, and once a government official

withdrew her decision to grant me an interview the moment I walked into her office, the general environment shaped by a coup attempt and subsequent purges in Turkey did not *per se* limit my access, pointing to yet another set of issues related to positionality and privilege in the hierarchical settings of transnational academic research (Sultana 2007; Wesner et al. 2014; Walsh et al. 2016).

As I have discussed in a contribution to an edited volume on researching South-South development cooperation (Mawdsley et al. 2019), across research sites, and without my having been in a position to plan any of it, respondents not only shared insights into their work but also ended up taking over other research-related functions. As "facilitators" (Haug 2019, 156f), they enabled or accompanied different stages of the fieldwork by helping me to navigate questions of access, understanding and safety. In New York, for instance, a representative of a UN observer state gave me his phone number after we had met for an interview. Whenever I wanted to get into the UN compound, I would send him a text message. A few minutes later he would walk through the gate, usher me through security, take me to the section reserved for delegates, shake my hand and let me roam. Thanks to him, I was able to spend long afternoons at the UN delegates lounge and sneak into committee meetings. Across fieldwork sites, people picked up the phone to arrange meetings with their friends and colleagues, across the corridor or at institutions I had not been to before, shared in-house documents, invited me to events or, in Mexico, helped me to secure a desk at the Foreign Ministry where I was able to observe day-to-day activities upfront.

Overall, these facilitators were key for all main stages of my research in institutional contexts (Buchanan et al. 1988; Jones 2015). They were in a position – and willing – to introduce me to spaces I had not known about or share their contacts and networks, without this being part of a formalized or even explicit arrangement. Contrary to the notion of gatekeeper (Burgess 1991; Corra and Willer 2002; Saunders 2006; Jones 2015; Singh and Wassenaar 2016), my facilitators were not necessarily exclusive controllers of access. They also did not just share accounts on specific issues relevant for the focus of research (like most informants, see Paerregaard 2002; Wagner et al. 2010) or formally vouch for my credibility (like sponsors, see Burgess 1991). Unlike interpreters, translators, brokers or fixers (Edwards 1998; Bujra 2006; Mosse and Lewis 2004; Turse 2017; Klein and Plaut 2017) they also did not operate under monetarized arrangements. Instead, the logic that the term 'facilitator' highlights is a holistic one: across sites, my facilitators engaged with and supported my research in a variety of –

usually informal – ways that contributed to creating the general enabling environment and concrete links necessary for my fieldwork to go ahead.

Importantly, this was not a one-way street. During the research process, many of my facilitators asked for advice or support related to processes or challenges they felt I might be able to help with – from translations and proofreading to questions of academic life and degree programmes, professional contacts or clues for understanding some of the intricate inner workings of UN institutions. In a variety of ways, I thus ended up taking on a facilitating role for my facilitators. In these processes of "mutual facilitation" (Haug 2019, 164f) the hierarchical settings we operated in, including structural privileges, still played a role, but they were part of a reciprocal arrangement. My facilitators used the specific features of their positionalities and life-worlds to support me, and I did the same. This did not offset the structural dynamics we were embedded in, but it made us accomplices: we engaged in "awkward and earnest attempts … to build relationships across difference" (Shaw Crane 2015, 350), well aware of the structural gaps and mismatches between our life-worlds that we decided to put to use. 'Giving back' to those one encounters during fieldwork processes is – as Gupta and Kelly (2014, 2) suggest – inherently relational and reciprocal. Building on Marcel Mauss's (1966 [1950]), the reciprocity of mutual facilitation did not just reflect a transactional logic but was intrinsically connected to broader sets of inter-personal ties, and contributed to "the creation and tending of social relationships" (Mawdsley 2011, 258).[31] While for my respondents and facilitators our encounters might have been everything from an opportunity to talk about their work or a welcome change in their everyday routine to simply another appointment they had agreed to out of a feeling of professional duty, for me, every encounter was a little gift each and everyone I talked to gave me without knowing what, if anything, this would lead to. The following chapters reflect much of what I learned from and with the people I met on the way.

[31] On friendships in fieldwork settings, see Glesne (1989); Burgess (1991).

# Chapter 3.

# Either/Or

The promise of Either/Or is belonging. The claim to exhaustiveness of two clear-cut and mutually exclusive categories assumes that belonging necessarily operates via one of two set categories. In its purest form, the Either/Or logic only knows two options: either A or B. If one equals A (=) then one does not equal B (≠), and vice versa. When investigating roles and positions in social space structured through binary poles, an Either/Or perspective thus focuses on whether a given entity can be said to be part of one pole or the other. Against the backdrop of the traditional setup of international development, the logic of Either/Or presents a seemingly clear-cut way of approaching questions about roles and positionalities: countries are part of either the 'North' (i.e. as a 'developed' donor country and member of the DAC) or the 'South' (i.e. as a 'developing' country recipient or 'emerging' provider and member of the G77). An Either/Or perspective on Mexico and Turkey thus tries to (re)claim the coherence and relevance of binaries and to assign both countries to one of the poles of international development**:** to what extent can Mexico and Turkey be said to be part of the grand imageries of 'North' or 'South'? How do different sources and parameters – including organisational membership patterns, official identity narratives, audience perceptions and individual experiences – make sense of their patterns of belonging? In this chapter I examine the particular ways in which Mexico and Turkey relate to the poles of 'North' (sections 1 and 2) and 'South' (sections 3 and 4) through elements of closeness and distance inherent to approximation processes. Based on that I develop the notion of approximation-as-Thirding (section 5) that highlights one set of ways in which Mexican and Turkish patterns of engagement challenge the North/South binary in international development.

# 1. Northwards

Since the institutionalisation of the field of international development after the Second World War, Mexico and Turkey have gone through remarkable processes of economic, social and political transformation. Their links with the OECD in particular – including DAC rules and practices – provide insights into their (relative) closeness to the 'North' and their specific versions of 'Northward' orientation. The direction of travel for Turkey's external relations had been clearly outlined with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923: built on "the ruins of the Ottoman Empire" (Pope 1991, para 2) Turkey was to become a 'civilised' country with a 'developed' economy, set to look towards Western Europe and the US in terms of economic, political, social and cultural inspiration (McGhee 1954; Fuller 2004; see Danforth 2008). Under Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk, President 1923-1938), the government's main focus was directed at reforming and transforming Turkish society in line with 'Western' standards. At the same time, Atatürk's "active neutralist" (Kili 1980, 401) approach to foreign policy under the rather inward-looking moto "peace at home, peace in the world" (TC-DB n.d.e; see Aras 2009) also included friendly relations with the Soviet Union (Danforth 2008).[32] After the Second World War – that Turkey had largely spent as a neutral country before deciding to support the Allied forces – Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952 and became far more firmly aligned with the 'Western' status-quo (see McGhee 1954). Turkey's engagement with international development dynamics was tightly embedded into this broader outlook towards the 'Western-Northern' world. The Turkish government also applied for associate membership at the European Economic Community in 1959 (Erdemli 2010); and with the signature of the Ankara Agreement in 1963 that included financial assistance for Turkey and the creation of a customs union, both parties established a formal framework for cooperation (Serdaroğlu 2013). In 1961, when regional groupings at the UN were set up, Turkey was not only assigned to the Western European and Others Group for questions of electoral purposes[33] but also joined the US, Canada and Western European countries in establishing the OECD (UN n.d.a; OECD n.d.). From the very beginning, Turkey was thus part of or associated with organisations that would come to represent large parts of the

[32] For a brief overview of the "turbulent relations" between Russia and Turkey, see Titov 2015.
[33] Together with the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and countries in Western Europe; see Chapter 4.

Brandt-Line 'North' and provide the framework for shaping development cooperation standards and practices.

Mexico, by contrast, was not part of the initial OECD membership but, in some ways, has been the epitome of a 'Northwards' mover when it comes to organisational membership patterns in the field of international development. For 300 years (1521-1821) the territories that today belong to Mexico had been a colony of the Spanish Empire as part of the *Virreinato de Nueva España* [Viceroyalty of New Spain]; and after experiences of foreign intervention, two attempts to establish a Mexican Empire, a major war with the US, dictatorship and revolution, Mexican governments in the first decades of the 20th century based their foreign policy on principles of non-intervention and self-determination (EUM-SC 2018; Mendoza 2014; see Hamnett 2001). While Mexico had been a vocal supporter of 'Third World' causes after the Second World War (see Figueroa 2017), this began to change with oil prices starting to fall in the early 1980s (Colmenares 2008; see Macrotrends 2019). Like many countries throughout Latin America, Mexico entered the so-called 'Década Perdida', the lost decade (Brieger 2002, 346f; Ocampo 2020): faced with rising interest rates and decreasing revenues, the Mexican government was unable to service its loan payments and had to restructure its debt (Toussaint 2007). Prior to the debt crisis, Mexico had already been perceived as a "status quo state" (Bello 1990, 45) and one of the more conservative voices among non-aligned countries; but the experience of the early 1980s led the Mexican government to fundamentally revisit its external economic and political relations. After a shaky trajectory of bilateral relations going back all the way to the 1846/7 US-Mexico war when Mexico had lost roughly half of its territory, it decided to push for economic liberalisation reforms and seek closer association with its northern neighbour (Smith 2000; Serrano 2014). As one Mexican senior diplomat put it during an interview, Mexican decision makers had realised that "Third World solidarity wasn't going to help our economy; we connected our wagon to the US steam engine and off we went" (Int-M-19).

Against the backdrop of negotiations that would eventually lead to the setup of NAFTA, Mexico began to explore the possibility of joining the OECD. As part of the application process, Mexico quit the G77 and in April 1994 became the 25th member country of the OECD (Covarrubias and Muñoz 2007; OECD 2019e). At the time, this was hailed as a milestone for both parties: the OECD admitted the first member in more than two decades and made a first step towards expansion into Latin America, while Mexico was said to be "the first developing

nation to join" (Associated Press 1994, para 1) the organisation. Against the backdrop of discussions about the growth potential of the Mexican economy, Mexico's OECD membership has had important symbolic value in what is depicted – by government officials, journalists and academics – as a set of important "step[s] toward becoming a developed country" (Gaona 2014, para 1), evidence for Mexico "march[ing] down the road to developed-nation status" (COHA 2012, para 2014), or the "emergence of a First World Mexico" (Selee et al. 2015, para 2; see Friedman 2016). In a context where former Mexican Foreign Minister (1994-1997) and Finance Minister (1998-2000) Angel Gurría as Secretary General and his chief of staff Gabriela Ramos have been the face of the OECD both externally and internally for more than a decade (since 2006), Mexico is currently a visible and engaged member of what has been duped the "developed countries' club" (Singh 1998, 71; Shibata 2016, 1).

## Embracing the DAC: expanding engagement and adopting standards

OECD accession not only changed Mexico's formal organisational belonging in an unprecedented way – it was the first country to effectively leave the G77[34] – but also contributed to expanding efforts to institutionalise Mexico's official engagement with international development. Consultations with the OECD accompanied not only the setup of the *Instituto Mexicano de Cooperación Internacional* (Mexican Institute for International Cooperation, INMEXCI, 1998-2000), which briefly provided an institutional home for Mexico's development cooperation within the Foreign Ministry (Figueroa 2014; Figueroa 2017), but also later on the drafting process of the 2011 International Development Cooperation Act and the creation of AMEXCID as the entity in charge of coordinating Mexico's engagement with development cooperation processes (EUM-PR 2011). As one Mexican diplomat put it, "without the OECD we wouldn't have AMEXCID today" (Int-M-49). Since then, Mexico has been among the most engaged observer countries to join so-called DAC peer-review processes, where DAC countries evaluate the performance of one of their fellow members, identify good practice and make recommendations for improvement (OECD n.d.b; *see Annex 4*). AMEXCID has also become an important ally for the OECD on development-related causes,

[34] New Zealand had signed the initial declaration in 1963 but had left before the G77 was formally set up in 1964 (Toye 2014). Korea left in 1997 (G77 1997); Cyprus, Malta and Romania left when joining the EU (Swart 2014).

from the definition of philanthropy guidelines to support for the development effectiveness agenda (OECD 2016b; Constantine and Shankland 2017, 110f).

Even more so than for Mexico, OECD frameworks have provided both context and guidelines for Turkey's engagement. This has been particularly visible through the Turkish government's ongoing commitment to follow the DAC-led reporting regime: since 1990, Turkey has been one of the few providers outside the DAC that regularly report ODA to the OECD, and DAC standards have remained the formal reference for deciding what is included in or excluded from Turkey's official development cooperation statistics (Int-T-4; see OECD 2017c; OECD 2019f). Throughout the 1990s, Turkey's ODA budget depended largely on domestic dynamics, particularly the lack of funding in what was a rather turbulent period for Turkey politically and economically (see Hausmann 2014). From 2003 onwards, the AKP government began to expand Turkey's development cooperation and put a particular emphasis on a more in-depth engagement with OECD reporting standards and data collection (UN-ECOSOC 2008, 51; Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 138; Hausmann 2014, 14). Together with additional funding for Turkish ODA, restructuring development cooperation reporting and addressing "the lack of awareness of the international criteria for aid calculations," as then-TIKA President Musa Kulaklıkaya (2010, 139f) put it, led to a visible increase in Turkey's ODA figures in 2004 and 2005. Around that time, the Turkish government began to refer to itself as 'net donor' (OECD 2007, 103; Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 111; TC-DB n.d.a); and OECD data suggests that at different moments during the first two decades of Turkish development cooperation reporting, Turkey indeed provided more ODA than it received (*see Annex 3.2.1*).

During the first decade of AKP rule (post-2002), alignment with DAC standards and practices reached a particularly elevated level. As an observer to the DAC since its creation, Turkey was the first non-DAC country to join DAC peer-review processes as observer in 2005 (*see Annex 4*); and over the last 15 years the Turkish government has repeatedly seconded TIKA officials to the OECD's Development Cooperation Directorate in order to expand TIKA's in-house ODA reporting expertise (Int-T-4; Int-T-8; Int-T-49). Official Turkish documents – such as Turkey's annual development assistance reports – have included not only details on DAC donor performances but also explicit references to the OECD's 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (Çam 2016, 5; TIKA 2016b, 46). What is more, official Turkish sources have repeatedly mentioned the 0.7-percent target as a reference for Turkey's own efforts, highlighting that Turkey is "[g]etting closer every year to the 0.7% mark

of ODA/GDP ratio" (Akdoğan 2016, 2). A benchmark that has generally been used to hold DAC donors to account for how much they provide, and usually for the extent to which they fail to provide enough (see Townsend 2015), has thus become a reference symbol for 'proper', that is DAC-aligned, donorship in Turkish accounts. Accordingly, then-TIKA President Kulaklıkaya presented Turkey as "a recent player in the donor community" whose level of institutionalisation and engagement was "reaching a higher level of sophistication day by day" (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 144). Overall, the standards against which the Turkish government measured its performance belonged to the established set of DAC rules and practices.

## From recipient to donor: a Turkish plot of linear emergence

A more detailed look at the ways in which official Turkish accounts have portrayed Turkey's engagement with international development over time provides a particularly insightful example for a 'Northwards' narrative. The first editions of Turkish Five-Year Development Plans in the 1960s explicitly acknowledged that *dış yardım* [foreign aid] and *teknik yardım* [technical assistance][35] from abroad were crucial drivers for the Turkish economy that – not least through the signature of the Ankara Agreement with the European Economic Community – was said to be entering "a dynamic period" (TC-DPT 1963, 11); and they discussed what needed to be done to ensure that the Turkish economy "will [no longer] need foreign aid" (TC-DPT 1968, 95). While references to technical assistance were on the decline in official accounts from the late 1970s onwards (TC-DPT 1973; TC-DPT 1989; TC-DPT 1995),[36] they were no longer referring to the support Turkey received through (Western) aid but to Turkey's own proactive engagement with *kalkınma için bölgesel işbirliği* [regional cooperation for development] domestically (TC-DPT 1979, 70). Under Turgut Özal, economic liberalisation policies went hand in hand with the outreach to potential and hitherto unexplored export markets (Donelli and Gonzalez 2016). In June 1985, Turkey's State Planning Organisation launched a 10 million US dollar institutional capacity building programme for seven countries in the Sahel region as a tool for expanding economic relations (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 133). In this context, the 6th Development Plan (1990-1994) included a section entitled *Uluslararası Teknik İşbirliği*

[35] *Yardım* means 'aid' but it also translated as 'assistance'.
[36] The 3rd Development Plan (TC-DPT 1973) is the last Plan to use the term 'foreign aid'. From the late 1970s to the 1990s references to technical assistance were on an all-time low in Development Plans.

[International Technical Cooperation] (TC-DPT 1989, 311), highlighting how support was to be provided to other countries through technical assistance (TC-DPT 1989, 311), mostly with the stated intent of expanding export markets.

With the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Turkey found itself in a position to engage with its neighbours to the north, north-west and north-east that, in many ways, had previously been out of reach. It was in this context that TIKA was established in 1992 under the Turkish Foreign Ministry, focusing on support for countries in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans (Fidan and Nurdun 2008; Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010; Hausmann 2014). Against this backdrop, Turkey's 7th Development Plan (1996-2000) referred to Turkey's technical assistance programmes as "important cooperation tool for enhancing relations with developing countries" (TC-DPT 1995, 85; see TC-DPT 2000, 57). Looking back at the establishment of TIKA, one Turkish official argued during an interview that "this was a milestone for us, we started to be someone, we had an agency, we were on our way to becoming a developed country, a donor country" (Int-T-41). Another long-serving official I interviewed highlighted that "of course the DAC was our goal, they [DAC donors] were calling the shots, we wanted to be more like them" (Int-T-11).

The same year TIKA was established, Turkey faced another defining moment for its place in the international cooperation landscape. During negotiations about what would become the Kyoto Protocol and later the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Turkey decided to be listed as a 'developed country' in Annexes I and II of the Protocol, *de facto* agreeing to shoulder considerable financial obligations in the international climate change regime. Turkish representatives at the time "emphasized that they would like to remain in the developed state status, on the same list as the EU" (Birpınar 2019, para 4). Turkey's position as part of the 'developed world' had thus been enshrined in what would become a key reference for international cooperation dynamics. Firmly aligned with this commitment to 'developed country' status, Turkey's official assistance policy was to serve as an identity marker and soft power tool "compatible with European values and a transatlantic orientation" (Davutoğlu 2009, n.p.) and in accordance with established DAC standards. The "important donor countries" (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 134) that had provided assistance to Turkey over decades were now the models according to which the Turkish government institutionalised its own engagement as development cooperation provider (Int-T-11; Int-T-19; see Hausmann 2014).

According to a wide range of sources in the first decade of AKP rule (post-2002), Turkey had thus moved from one pole of international development to the other, "from a recipient to an emerging donor country" (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 133; see TC-DB 2011, n.p.). As then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan repeatedly highlighted, "we have raised the status of Turkey from recipient country to net donor of aid; from being on the receiving side to the giving side" (TIKA 2012, 3). Within roughly two decades, Turkey was said to have become a first-row aspirant to full donorship and an increasingly important "player in the donor community" (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 141 and 144). Until the early 2010s, official accounts presented Turkey as a textbook example of linear emergence: moving 'from recipient to donor' in line with the established notions of DAC donorship, evidenced through a substantial increase in outgoing ODA.

## 2. Approximating the 'North'?

While both Mexico and Turkey have thus moved 'Northwards' in a variety of ways, their engagement with OECD-related frameworks and processes over the last decades has also been characterised by a palpable level of ambiguity. In everyday parlance, ambiguity refers to statements or situations with "more than one possible meaning" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019a, para 1) that create or are accompanied by notions of uncertainty, doubtfulness and confusion. For Simone de Beauvoir (1976 [1948], 9), ambiguity is not a peripheral and therefore negligible phenomenon but one of "the genuine conditions of our life." In light of the inevitability of uncertainty and confusion, de Beauvoir suggests that people are best advised to "try to assume our fundamental ambiguity" in their engagement with the world and explicitly acknowledge that most of what is thought, said or experienced falls short of "signify[ing] monolithically" (Sedgwick 1993, 8). One way of assuming ambiguity is to focus on elements of closeness and distance in approximation processes – where questions of resemblance and belonging remain without clear-cut answers. The notion of approximation accepts a given pole or category as a reference point but acknowledges some level of imprecision or blurriness. In mathematics, approximation refers to equations where two quantities are almost but not exactly the same (Clapham and Nicholson 2014). To reflect this

'incongruent congruence', the sign of equality '=' is slightly adapted to become the sign of approximation '≈'. Its wavy lines suggest that the straightforward relationship of the conventional equal sign is softened: in contrast to the inequality sign '≠', the wavy lines of approximation carry the notion "be[ing] almost the same" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019b, para 2). Outside of mathematical applications approximation is defined as "something that is similar to another thing but not exactly the same" or a "guess of [something] that is not exact but that is close" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019c, para 1). Centring around the notion of "close … but not the same" (Merriam Webster 2019b, para 1), approximation highlights resemblance but also contains some necessary level of incongruence. By conceptually focusing on one specific point of reference – such as a category or pole – approximation refers to dynamics of (relative) closeness that necessarily include some level of (relative) distance. With regard to Mexico and Turkey's positionalities in international development, the ambiguity of their patterns of 'Northern' belonging – namely their relative distance to the 'North' – come to the fore not only in terms of changing relations with the DAC but also regarding the idiosyncratic use of ODA standards and the introduction of rhetorical distance to OECD language.

## Waning interest in the DAC

Despite substantial rapprochement with the OECD, both Mexico and Turkey have remained outside the DAC as the core of 'Northern' bilaterals in international development. While DAC membership might once have been a (distant) goal for Mexico and a (rather concrete) option for Turkey, it is now "off the table" (Int-Tur-33) for both countries (Int-T-20; Int-M-24; see Hausmann 2014). Representatives from both AMEXCID and TIKA affirmed that it had been years that the possibility of joining the DAC had been discussed in more detail in their respective agencies. As a Mexican official put it:

> It is far more convenient for us the way it is; we don't want to be limited by their frameworks. We don't see the point [of joining], and they [the DAC] know that we don't see the point, so we don't talk about it anymore (Int-M-49).

This waning interest is also reflected in the relevance attached to participating in DAC peer-review processes, a key part of how the DAC provides feedback, learning and monitoring opportunities for its members. Mexico and Turkey were not only the first two countries to engage as observers with DAC peer reviews but have also accompanied more review

processes than all other non-DAC countries. Recently, however, this engagement has been on the decline. The last time Mexican representatives joined a DAC peer review was in 2015 (*see Annex 4*); and there is a general sense at AMEXCID that this kind of engagement carries little potential for the future. As one official argued:

> I'm not sure this [accompanying a DAC peer review] is a good investment of our time and energy; we don't want to join the DAC, we don't need to be part of that process to learn … from them (Int-M-22).

For Turkey, the readiness to learn from DAC peers has decreased even further. As one TIKA official put it, "the way they [DAC donors] do things is not our way; we tried it and it was ok but that's it" (Int-T-9). The last time Turkish representatives joined a DAC peer-review process was in 2010, well before most other non-DAC providers from Indonesia and Romania to Israel and Brazil even started to engage (*see Annex 4*).

## Turkey's partial adoption of ODA standards

While Mexican institutions have not reported ODA to date and thus keep visibly distance to traditional 'Northern' standards and practices, Turkey – as noted above – has since 1990 been part of the small group of non-DAC providers that regularly report ODA to the OECD. Turkey's way of dealing with ODA guidelines, however, provides a particularly insightful example of what approximating the 'North' can come to mean in development cooperation reporting. While Turkish ODA has skyrocketed over the last decade – expanding by 12 times from 684 million USD in 2010 to 8.1 billion USD in 2017 (*see Annex 3.2.1*) – the composition of these numbers on the one hand and the nature of their sources on the other point to notable particularities. With the onset of the Syrian war, the share of expenditure for humanitarian purposes in Turkish ODA started increasing exponentially: while it was a minimal part of Turkish ODA pre-2011 (only four percent in 2008; *see Annex 3.2.2*), in 2017 89.6 percent of Turkish ODA was reported as humanitarian assistance, almost equivalent to the amount reported under the Syria column (88.2 percent, i.e. more than seven billion US dollars; *see Annex 3.2.3*). While roughly 90 percent of Turkish ODA was thus reported as going to Syria, for a long time neither TIKA nor any other Turkish government agency had any major

development-related operations on Syrian territory;[37] instead, Turkish government entities reported resources spent on supporting Syrian nationals in Turkey (Int-T-8; Int-T-21).

Whether donor countries may include their expenditure for refugees on their own territories into ODA calculations has been the subject of some controversy (Besharati 2017; Killen 2017; Development Initiatives 2019).[38] In 2016 the OECD-DAC published a study comparing the different ways donor countries operationalise 'in-donor refugee costs' (OECD 2016a; see OECD 2017d). While there has been a high diversity among donors on what and how they report, there is one guideline accepted by all of them, codified by the OECD in 1988 and explicitly reaffirmed in 2017: only expenditure for a refugee's first twelve months in a host country can be included in ODA calculations (OECD 2016a; Anders 2017; OECD 2018a). In the Turkish case – as only aggregate numbers are reported – it is unclear whether Turkish numbers abide by these guidelines. During interviews, OECD officials in charge of following up on ODA data highlighted that they had very little leverage to monitor numbers sent in from TIKA. As one of them stated, "as long as [Turkey] does not report at the activity level, we have no detailed information on what exactly the money was spent on" (Int-IO-46). Given the sharp decrease in newly arriving Syrians in Turkey over the last years (DGMM 2017a; HRW 2018) and, simultaneously, the rising levels of Turkish ODA reported under 'Syria', ODA data provided by the Turkish government to the OECD is likely to consist of expenditure for Syrians well beyond their first year in Turkey. In other words, large parts of almost 90 percent of what the Turkish government reports to the OECD remain within the Turkish economy and would, if strict DAC standards were applied, not count as ODA (Int-IO-50; see OECD 2019f; *see Chapter 5*).

While the application of ODA rules has also faced challenges across DAC members (OECD 2016a; OECD 2017d; Young-Powell 2017), OECD officials agree that the composition of significant parts of Turkish ODA categorically differs from those of DAC donor agencies (Int-IO-44; Int-IO-45). Irrespective of whether DAC-set standards are appropriate or legitimate (see Besharati 2017; Fejerskov and Keijzer 2019), what matters here is that in terms of ODA

[37] This changed following Turkey's 2016-2017 Operation Euphrates Shield; see BBC 2017; Tastekin 2017; Tastekin 2018.

[38] In Turkey, only individuals from Council of Europe member states are eligible for refugee status, going back to geographical restrictions the Turkish government added to its approval of a 1968 amendment to the Geneva Convention (Foça 2011). Syrians currently enjoy a *Geçici Koruma* [Temporary Protection] status (DGMM 2017b) that can easily be revoked.

reporting, Turkey's DAC-wards move has been a partial one. While OECD officials are interested in ensuring that large non-DAC providers like Turkey report their development cooperation as ODA and thus add data to their official statistics that may have little to do with officially agreed standards (see Int-IO-40; Int-IO-42), the British NGO Development Initiatives has tried to account for the particularity of Turkish data by excluding it from calculations of total global expenses for humanitarian assistance and highlighting that Turkish numbers lack comparability (Development Initiatives 2016; 2017; 2018). Even Turkish officials admit that the statistics nurturing Turkish ODA reporting may be of dubious origin, and that TIKA itself has very little insight into the whereabouts of numbers provided by other government entities, such as the Ministry of Health or the disaster and emergency management agency (Int-T-4; Int-T-8). During interviews, those familiar with Turkish ODA reporting practices answered questions about the relative standing of Turkey as a (humanitarian assistance) donor or the reliability of Turkish data using phrases like 'yes but', 'sort of' and 'but not really'. As an OECD representative put it, "numbers show that Turkey is a major donor, but I'd be cautious in drawing conclusions based on that kind of data" (Int-IO-51). A TIKA official, in turn, drew a direct line between ODA reporting practices and Turkey's general positionality:

> Of course it is important for our leaders to show [through ODA figures] that we are a big donor; we report ODA – but, well, we are not really part of them [DAC donors], things here are a bit different (Int-T-37).

## Explicit and experienced distance to the 'North'

In more or less subtle ways, both Mexican and Turkish accounts contain references to why they are 'a bit different' from DAC donors and reflect various ways of keeping distance to the 'North'. In general terms, Mexican officials underline that Mexico's standing as an OECD country seems at odds with their everyday working realities (Int-M-6; Int-M-15; Int-M-22). As one of them argued:

> I mean, look around you, look at Iztapalapa [Mexico City's poorest neighbourhood], look at Guerrero [one of Mexico's poorest states], we are part of the OECD on paper, but we are not really an OECD country, I mean really, we are not (Int-M-9).

They are joined by representatives of multilateral development bodies and civil society observers that, irrespective of Mexico's OECD membership, are far from assigning Mexico an unequivocal 'developed country' label (Int-IO-6; Int-IO-16; Int-N-2). Against this backdrop, the

contours of Mexico's 'donorship' have remained equivocal. In official Mexican sources, the last years have seen a move from 'donor' to 'provider' terminology, a subtle indication that after an initial donorship euphoria DAC-related notions currently provide less of a reference. Individually, several officials at AMEXCID expressed ambiguity about the extent to which Mexico should be seen as a 'donor'. One summarised a feeling that came through in a range of accounts:

> We try to be a donor, but we are not, not really. We are part of the OECD, but we are not a donor country, we don't have much money, we have all these structures and frameworks but very little is happening (Int-M-17).

For Turkish officials, in turn, DAC donorship used to be both a clear goal and set of guidelines for engagement, but official Turkish accounts have also been explicit in highlighting that Turkey may well be part of the OECD and report ODA but still has a rather different way of engaging with its partners and 'doing development'. Even during the heyday of Turkey's alignment with DAC standards and references to Turkey as 'emerging donor' in the first decade of the 2000s, official sources would mention that despite its expanding engagement, Turkey was quite different from DAC member countries and instead shared "many characteristics with other emerging donors" where assistance allocation "reflect[s] strong cultural, commercial, and geographical orientations" (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 141). Official comparisons were made with South Korea or Poland that, at the time, had not yet joined the DAC (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010; see Hausmann 2014). More recently, the rhetorical distance to DAC donors has increased further, with officials explicitly criticising the standards and practices set up by 'developed countries' (Çam 2017; *see Chapter 5*). While Mexico and Turkey are 'close' to fellow OECD members, they are in certain – and some quite visible – ways 'not the same'. Their engagement patterns reflect palpable distance to the 'North', such as the waning interest in DAC membership and DAC peer-review processes, the lack of or partial adoption of ODA standards or the distance to the DAC expressed in official narratives and individual accounts. The ways in which Mexico and Turkey approximate the 'North' – their particular interplays of closeness and distance to DAC standards and practices – exhibit considerable levels of ambiguity. Their links to the 'North' are far from clear-cut and, critically, seem to be on the decline.

# 3. Southwards

Against the backdrop of increasing levels of distance to the 'North', the logic of Either/Or suggests that Mexico and Turkey's links with the 'South' are likely to have expanded. And indeed, in a range of ways Mexico and Turkey can be said to be closely associated with or even have increased their leaning towards 'Southern' partners, platforms and practices. Irrespective of OECD membership, socio-economic realities in Mexico and Turkey have been exposed to dynamics quite different from those at work in other OECD societies. As one OECD official put it:

> Turkey and Mexico, I always feel they belong together somehow, we always put them in the same category …; most of the time they are right at the bottom of our statistics (Int-IO-51).

In Mexican circles, there has been a controversial and ongoing debate among journalists, academics and policy makers about whether Mexico "will always be underdeveloped" (Destrabau 2018, para 1) or "has the necessary features" (Madrid 2015, para 1) to one day "become a fully developed country" (Peña Nieto 2017, para 1; see Olivas 2016; Fernández 2018). In line with most large economies from what for decades had been referred to as the 'developing world', Mexico is currently classified as an upper middle-income country (World Bank 2019b). Despite appraisals that refer to Mexico as "one of the most advanced developing countries in the world" (Investopedia 2019b, n.p.), mainstream development indicators show that inequality levels have remained high (IndexMundi 2017; Knoema 2019) and structural challenges abound. Mexico's municipal Human Development Index (HDI) issued by UNDP and national poverty statistics provide insights into deep-rooted inequalities: while nationally aggregated indicators have steadily improved over the last decades, some of Mexico's lowest-ranked municipalities still score at the same level as the lowest-ranked countries on the global HDI, and almost 50 percent of Mexicans live below the national poverty line (UNDP-Mexico 2014; CONEVAL 2019; Haug forthcoming). Compared to other OECD countries, influential representatives of Mexican politics and the private sector have argued that Mexico "remains tied to the status of an underdeveloped country" (Cruz 2011, para 1). Based on income-related calculations that are taken as reference for deciding about ODA eligibility, Mexico has also remained on the DAC recipient list. While it has always received considerably less ODA than its Central American neighbours in per capita terms, measured in total amounts Mexico is currently receiving more ODA than Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize combined, and

significantly more than during any period before the 2000s (*see Annex 3.1.6; see Chapters 4 and 5*). With a focus on socio-economic data and poverty-related discussions, Mexico-the-recipient or Mexico-the-developing-country thus seems to clearly belong to the 'South'.

Like Mexico, Turkey is classified as an upper middle-income country and faces pronounced subnational development disparities. While poverty levels are overall lower than in Mexico, provincial HDI data suggests that there is a major regional gap between a 'highly developed' west juxtaposed to a 'not-so-highly developed' south-east (Daniell et al. 2011; Global Data Lab 2019).[39] While all Turkish provinces score higher today then 30 years ago, the gap between the lowest-ranking and the highest-ranking Turkish provinces is higher today than it was in 1990. During the Cold War in particular, and more so than Mexico, Turkey used to be at the receiving end of international assistance flows. In 1947 and 1948, Turkey was one of 17 countries to receive US support through the Marshall Plan (McGhee 1954, 629; Toperic and Unver Noi 2017),[40] and the OECD – through Turkey's Long-term Development Issues Working Group and the Consortium for Aid to Turkey (1962-1993) – later offered mechanisms to coordinate assistance by different donor countries in line with Turkey's development plans and monitor requirements for external financial support (Cicioğlu and Cicioğlu 2017 ; TC-DB n.d.d; see Kuchenberg 1967). While early editions of Turkish Development Plans in the 1960s did not use the term *acılı ülke* [recipient] as such, they explicitly highlighted the substantial support Turkey received from abroad and discussed how it was being used (see sections on *teknik yardım* in TC-DPT 1968; TC-DPT 1973; TC-DPT 1979; TC-DPT 1984). Bilateral aid agencies from individual DAC donors, such as Japan and Germany, also began to expand their assistance to Turkey in the 1970s (Umut 2016; *see Annex 3.2.8*). While Turkey's ODA/GNI ratio as recipient never made it above 1.5 percent, ODA provisions by OECD donors fluctuated considerably over the decades: in times of economic and financial crises in Turkey ODA levels would go up; and once the economic situation seemed more stable ODA levels would come down again (*see Annex 3.2.6*). Like Mexico, Turkey has not only remained on the DAC list of recipient countries but has also received more ODA over the last years than ever before; and, like Mexico's, its scores on mainstream development indices highlight Turkey's closeness to the 'recipient' pole in international development.

[39] This paragraph draws on Haug forthcoming.
[40] Turkey had also received economic assistance from the Soviet Union in the 1930s, see Özgöker and Ataman 2013, 25.

## Multilateral engagement with 'Southern' credentials

Turkey's links to the multilateral imaginary of the 'developing South' go back a long way. After the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the newly established Republic of Turkey was seen as having stripped off all imperial grandeur to join the international periphery as part of what would later be referred to as the 'developing world'. For a short moment the so-called Turkish independence movement led by Mustafa Kemal used anti-colonial and anti-imperial rhetoric to make its case against the occupation through European powers (Çapan and Zarakol 2017, 196; see Zarakol 2011, 125f). Some have even argued that the setup of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 "heralded the birth of the third world" by providing "amenable guidelines for the developing nations of the world" (Kili 1980, 401) aimed at getting rid of outside domination.[41] After the Second World War, Turkey was not only one of the first recipients in the incipient institutional structures and processes of international development but also participated in one of the founding moments of the post-war 'South': building on the Kemalist notion of "complete independence" that shared characteristics with the idea of non-alignment (Kili 1980, 402; Ilgıt and Özkeçeci-Taner 2012, 101f), the Turkish government sent representatives to attend the 1955 Asia-Africa conference in Bandung, making Turkey one of 29 countries to be part of arguably the most emblematic meeting of the post-war 'developing world' and a corner stone for what would later be referred to as the spirit of 'South-South' cooperation (Nesadurai 2005; see Baba and Ertan 2016).

While Turkey did not join the G77 and mostly stayed away from North/South debates in the 1970s (see Arda 2018), Turkish representatives still voted with the G77 on symbolic development-related resolutions at the UN General Assembly, such as the one on the New International Economic Order (UN-DL 2019a). It was also in the 1970s that Turkish voices began to more explicitly challenge "Turkey's complete rapprochement with the West" and, as Sana Kili (1980, 402) argued at the time, refer to

> Turkey's commitments to the Western alliance system as "suffocating", "limiting" commitments. Moreover, it is being widely claimed that these commitments constitute the primary cause for the alienation of Turkey from the third world.

The economic liberalisation policies under Turgut Özal in the 1980s provided the foundation and reference for an explicit turn to parts of the 'developing world' that has taken place under

[41] For a brief account on links between the end of the Ottoman Empire and the Indian independence movement, see Gilani 2019.

successive AKP governments since the early 2000s (Donelli and Gonzalez 2018). Under the AKP vision of a 'global Turkey', external relations with spaces beyond Europe have expanded considerably, in line with initial Kemalist notions of 'multidimensional' external relations (see Bilgic 2016, 14 and 93f). Trade and export figures show that, in relative terms, Turkey's economic relations with Europe have declined while economic ties with non-European spaces – such as the United Arab Emirates and Iraq – have been strengthened (OEC 2019; WITS 2019).

As part of this trend of Turkey moving beyond a 'Western-Northern' orientation, TIKA's role has been key for establishing and deepening ties with countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Nuroğlu 2013; Güngor 2015; İpek 2015; see Fidan and Nurdun 2008; Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010). As part of the various schemes the Turkish government has set up over the last decade, there have been a few scattered references to 'South-South' cooperation in TIKA reports or on the TIKA website, mostly with regard to collaboration with bilateral or multilateral development agencies, particularly UN bodies (UNDP Turkey 2006; TIKA 2012, 139; TIKA 2014a, 139). In a 2018 brochure, the Turkish government stated – apparently for the first time – that "TİKA considers [the] entirety of its development cooperation portfolio as South-South cooperation" (TIKA 2018g, 2). In terms of multilateral efforts, the Turkish government hosted the UN's fourth conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Istanbul in 2011, the first time that such an event took place outside Western Europe (UN 2011). In the leadup to the conference, the Turkish government was eager to highlight Turkey's leadership on LDC support as a strong voice from the 'developing world', referencing 'South-South' cooperation as a key modality for Turkey's international engagement (Sinirlioğlu 2007; TC-DB n.d.a). The Turkish government also co-organised the 2016 LDC mid-term review and the 2017 UN South-South Development Expo in Antalya. In terms of more permanent structures, since 2018 Turkey has hosted the recently established UN Technology Bank for LDCs in Gebze that the UN has hailed as "South-South cooperation in practice" (UNOSSC 2018, para 1; see Haug forthcoming).

Mexico, in turn, has historically had an even stronger affinity with regional spaces and developing country groupings that became part of the institutionalised landscape of multilateral politics with the decolonisation wave after the Second World War (see Kennedy 2016). Throughout the 1970s, Mexican representatives were among the more vocal voices of the 'Third World' (Echeverría 1972; see Figueroa 2017). In 1981, the Mexican government hosted the North-South Summit in Cancún; and it also supported the South Commission set

up in 1987 to "help the peoples and governments of the South to be more effective in overcoming their numerous problems" (Nyerere 1990, vi). Like Turkey, Mexico was part of a list of countries identified early on by the UN as key players for cooperation activities in 'developing regions' (UN 1995; UN 1997). Mexico's support for Central American countries via the oil supply facility set up with Venezuela through the San José Accord signed in 1980 – and extended several times until 2012 (Figueroa 2014, 48) – has stood out as a particularly visible example of 'South-South' economic cooperation schemes (UN 1995; Mawdsley 2012, 170; Cortés 2016, 159f; Figueroa 2017; Stargardter 2017).

Today Mexico is part of the large bodies and networks that make up the broad and sprawling institutionalised spaces of Latin American and the Caribbean – including the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States – and also smaller sub-regional or mini-lateral mechanisms, such as Mesoamerican platforms or the Pacific Alliance (Sabatini 2014; *see Chapters 4 and 5*). Across multilateral development spaces, Mexico's Latin American identity goes largely unquestioned and has provided the reference for a strong pattern of regional belonging. Against the backdrop of traditional and still influential imaginaries that portray the 'South' as a tricontinental phenomenon bringing together peoples from Asia, Africa and Latin America (see Prashad 2012; Zolov 2016; Tricontinental 2019), it is through this regional embeddedness that Mexico's 'Southern' belonging comes most tangibly to the fore. This is also visible at the UN where Mexico is part of GRULAC, the regional grouping of 33 Latin American and Caribbean states that, except for Mexico, are all members of the G77 (see UN n.d.a). In terms of voting patterns on development-related resolutions at the UN General Assembly, Mexico has, by and large, continued to follow a typical Latin American 'developing country' trajectory. Voting records – including those of draft resolutions – show that, across issue areas, Mexico has consistently sided with the G77 on controversial votes. This is illustrated, for instance, by the resolution on the New International Economic Order, arguably among the most emblematic at the Second Committee where development-related issues are tabled (UN-GA 2019). Every time this resolution has come to a vote since 1979, Mexico has voted with 'yes' and thus sided with the G77, on whose behalf the resolution has been introduced (UN-DL 2019a). The same goes for the resolution on Unilateral Economic Measures (UN-DL 2019b) and resolutions that are normally approved by consensus and get voted on only in specific years due to conjunctural tensions along G77-related fault lines, such as the

South-South cooperation resolution in 2014 (UN-DL 2019d) or the resolution on Agenda 21 since 2016 (UN-DL 2019c).

## A 'Southern' partner: Mexico's rhetorical shift from 'donor' to 'provider'

Beyond the UN General Assembly, Mexico has been a visible and engaged player in (cross)regional development spaces that put an explicit focus on 'South-South' cooperation, such as the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Ibero-American Conference facilitated by the *Secretaría General Iberoamericana* [Ibero-American General Secretariat, SEGIB]. At ECLAC, Mexican representatives have been actively involved with the organisation's South-South Cooperation Committee (Int-M-12; Int-G-16; see UN-ECLAC 2016a; UN-ECLAC 2018b); and in SEGIB statistics on regional South-South cooperation, Mexico stands out as one of the most active provider countries in annual South-South cooperation reports (SEGIB 2018, 175f). Based on project types and aggregated numbers, Mexico also tops SEGIB's latest rankings of bilateral cooperation schemes (SEGIB 2018, 47; *see Annex 3.1.7*). While these numbers vary from year to year, Mexico has – since the first SEGIB South-South Cooperation Report in 2007 – always been among the most engaged countries in the region (see SEGIB 2019), and during interviews SEGIB figures were popular among AMEXCID officials to illustrate Mexico's performance in 'South-South' schemes (Int-M-9; Int-M-13; Int-M-25). Against the backdrop of Mexico's active and variegated engagement, not only SEGIB or UN bodies like ECLAC but also initiatives led by the OECD or individual DAC donors have been keen on "including Mexico as a representative of Southern partners" (GPEDC 2016, 5; see Int-G-28; Int-IO-35).

Explicit references to 'South-South' are also part of how official Mexican accounts delineate Mexico's place in international development spaces more generally. As the central programmatic document for AMEXCID, the 2014-2018 *Programa de Cooperación Internacaional para el Desarrollo* (International Development Cooperation Programme, PROCID) holds that Mexico is set to "position itself as one of the leaders of South-South cooperation" (SRE 2014a, 8). The PROCID defines South-South cooperation as "[c]ooperation that is provided by developing countries to other developing countries" and that follows three basic principles: a horizontal engagement without conditions, a consensual process, and the fair distribution of costs and benefits (SRE 2014a, Glosario). Based on this definition, the

PROCID formulates Mexico's role as provider country with reference to South-South vocabulary: Mexico is set to "[e]xpand and promote international development cooperation with strategic countries and regions" under the banner of "South-South and Triangular Cooperation" (SRE 2014a, Estr.2.1). References to 'South-South' are spread throughout official communication on the AMEXCID website (AMEXCID 2017c; AMEXCID 2018e; AMEXCID 2018f; AMEXCID 2018k; cf. AMEXCID 2018a), including in a 2015 promotional video that highlights that for more than 70 years Mexico has given "a hand to sister nations around the world", particularly throughout the Americas, and that 'South-South' cooperation has "deep roots in our country" (AMEXCID 2015a, 00:14f).

One of the most notable changes that has accompanied the expanding clout of 'South-South' vocabulary, as briefly mentioned above, is a shift away from the term 'donor'. Over the last decades, official accounts have used different terminologies to describe Mexico's role in development cooperation settings, including *donante* [donor], *oferente* [provider] and *cooperante* [cooperator] (EUM-PR 2011; SRE 2014a). While cooperator is a more general term defined as an entity "executing cooperation activities", the PROCID uses 'donor' and 'provider' interchangeably to refer to entities that "have the intention and the capacity to offer benefits to those generally called recipients" (SRE 2014a, Glosar). While the PROCID, like the 2011 International Development Cooperation Act, thus still refers to Mexico as a 'donor' (SRE 2014a, 8, 13 and 35), it relies more on 'provider' terminology; and more recent accounts published by AMEXCID completely refrain from using donor terminology and employ the term 'provider' instead (AMEXCID 2018a; AMEXCID 2018e; AMEXCID 2018f; AMEXCID 2018g). This shift of terms indicates a minor but significant repositioning of the main identity narrative put forward by official Mexican accounts: Mexico is no longer said to be a 'donor' and thus somewhat close to OECD-DAC member countries; instead, it is referred to as a 'provider' and thus as part of the larger and less formally defined group of large and increasingly visible 'Southern' players from outside the OECD that engage in a variety of different forms of cooperation beyond the ODA umbrella (see UN-ESCAP 2019). This notion of Mexico as a provider with a long tradition of international solidarity outside DAC donor circles also comes to the fore in accounts on the history of Mexico's international cooperation published by the Foreign Ministry (Figueroa 2014; Figueroa 2017) and different AMEXCID materials. AMEXCID's 2015 promotional video, for instance, ends with a compilation of images that show members of the Mexican marine corps delivering parcels and large containers, as well as dark-skinned

children with food in their hands. The voice from the off, accompanied by film music, states: “For Mexico, South-South cooperation is a foreign policy priority and a solidarity commitment to the world” (AMEXCID 2015a, 02:42f).

## 4. Approximating the ‘South’?

Despite the explicit use of ‘South-South’ references and action framed as acts of solidarity among ‘developing countries’, a focus on the interplay of closeness and distance inherent to approximation processes suggest that Mexico and Turkey have had a rather ambivalent relationship with the ‘South’. In multilateral spaces, the fact that Mexico and Turkey are not part of the G77 is the most visible sign that their belonging to the ‘South’ is far from clear-cut. Turkey’s uneasy relationship with the ‘developing world’ – as the ‘successor state’ of the Ottoman Empire – became palpable well before the notion of the ‘South’ gained currency. Early references to Turkey’s struggle for independence as ‘post-colonial’ or ‘anti-imperial’ made way to a clear orientation towards the ‘Western-Northern’ world, accompanied by official attempts to highlight that Turkey had never been formally colonised (Çapan and Zarakol 2017; cf. Kili 1980). As Zeynep Gülşah Çapan and Ayşe Zarakol (2017, 197) have argued, “whatever anticolonial sentiments and sense of solidarity with colonised peoples that had existed prior to the founding of the Republic dissipated quickly.” Instead, Turkey’s membership at NATO and later on at the OECD was set to condition its relationship with the expanding institutional structures of the ‘South’. At Bandung in 1955, Turkey was seen as too close an ally of the US and Western Europe by representatives of ‘Third World’ or ‘Non-Aligned’ countries (Abraham 2008; Baba and Ertan 2016; Donelli and Gonzalez 2018). As mentioned above, the Turkish government did not join the G77 and also kept its distance from North/South debates in the 1960s, 70s and 80s (see CIA 1981; Arda 2018). It thus came as little surprise that Turkey was not part of the 1994 inter-governmental agreement at the UN that, based on the findings of the South Commission’s report *The Challenges of the South*, established the South Centre in 1994 as an “intergovernmental think-tank of developing countries“ (South Commission 1990, 6) set to “promote South solidarity, South consciousness

and mutual knowledge and understanding among the countries and peoples of the South" (UN 1994, 1 and 15).

Mexico's absence from the setup of the South Centre, in turn, was all the more symbolic, as the Mexican government had in the late 1980s not only sent a senior diplomat as official representative to the South Commission but had also covered part of the Commission's expenses (South Commission 1990, 303). The decision of leaving the G77 when joining the OECD in 1994 meant that, almost from one day to another, Mexico had joined "the other side" (Swart 2014, para 8). Ever since, the memory of past belonging to the institutionalised 'South' has remained palpable. For seasoned diplomats – particularly those who remember the transformations of the 1980s and 1990s – Mexico leaving the G77 has remained an important reference point for making sense of their position in the field of international development. During interviews, some still expressed anger:

> We were actually on the [UN] Security Council in the 1980s, the G77 had explicitly asked us to apply; we were really part of that group, you know, and then this inflexible, over-principled, stupid Foreign Minister [Manuel Tello] sent that letter [to the G77]. People have said it wasn't the nicest letter, [it showed] a complete lack of understanding for the importance of pragmatism in foreign policy (Int-M-2).

Another diplomat disagreed with blaming Mexico and explicitly referred to former Foreign Minister Manuel Tello's memoirs to highlight that "the OECD forced us to leave the G77; that wasn't our idea" (Int-M-19); and he continued:

> [After the financial crisis of the early 1980s] the lesson Mexico had learned was that Third World solidarity was not the solution for strong and long-term economic development …. But Mexico never ceased to see itself as a developing country in solidarity with developing countries.

With reference to Mexico as the first country to effectively leave the alliance, Mexican diplomats who were part of the foreign service in the 1990s argued that they had faced a particularly challenging situation as "frontrunners" (Int-M-37) in the changing geographies of international development alliances. A senior official argued that the OECD/G77 division "was particularly tough for us; when it was on Korea to make a move [in 1996] the context had changed, nobody was talking about the G77 anymore" (Int-M-42). When Chile joined the OECD in 2010, the Chilean government simply refused to leave the G77 (Swart 2014), a move referred to as "pretty clever" (Int-M-5) by a young Mexican diplomat. Across accounts, the G77 is an almost ubiquitous point of reference in how Mexican diplomats describe their positions and experiences when it comes to development-related debates at the UN. Some

speak of Mexico leaving the G77 with regret (Int-M-2; Int-M-47), while others make a case for why it was or seemed necessary at the time (Int-M-9; Int-M-35) or try to brush it away as "things of the past" (Int-M-46). Taken together, interview accounts suggest that the change in Mexico's relationship with the G77 has had a palpable impact on Mexico's engagement with international development, and that since the early 1990s, questions of positionality and belonging have become more difficult to answer.

## The limited use of 'South-South' references

While both Mexican and Turkish accounts include references to official engagement with 'South-South cooperation, a closer look at how, when and where these references have been made point to dynamics that are far from clear-cut. In Turkish accounts, the use of 'South-South' has been limited. While there are a few scattered examples – notably the 2018 brochure mentioned above (TIKA 2018g) – 'South' terminology has not played a particularly visible role in official narratives about Turkey's external relations. Most references relate to specific schemes that have been labelled as 'South-South' by external players, such as bilateral or multilateral development agencies (TIKA 2012; TIKA 2014a; TIKA 2017b; cf. TIKA 2018l). On the website of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the English version of the section on Turkey's development cooperation contains an explicit references to South-South that is missing from the otherwise similar Turkish version (see TC-DB n.d.a; cf. TC-DB n.d.b). If at all, official Turkish sources have thus taken up 'South-South' references put forward by other voices, and/or for consumption by non-Turkish audiences, largely without appropriating 'South'-related terminology for their self-descriptions (see TIKA 2019a).

In Mexican accounts, the popularity of 'South' references has increased more visibly but has been a rather recent phenomenon. National Development Plans to date and key frameworks such as the 2011 International Development Cooperation Act do not use 'South-South' terminology at all. Where it is employed, the 'South-South' label is also not used to refer to all of Mexico's development cooperation evenly. As mentioned above, the 2014 PROCID as reference document for Mexico's development cooperation defines South-South cooperation as a horizontal relationship between "countries of similar development levels" (SRE 2014a, 23) where "both costs and benefits are shared" (SRE 2014a, Glosario). In line with this definition, the collaboration schemes Mexico has set up with South American countries – such

as the joint cooperation funds with Uruguay and Chile – are among the limited number of initiatives repeatedly cited as "fundamentally horizontal" (AMEXCID 2018f, n.p.) and as examples for "genuine South-South cooperation" (Int-M-24). In Central America and the Caribbean, Mexico's priority regions (EUM-PR 2011, 8), by contrast, the sharing of costs and benefits is the exception rather than the rule; most of the time the Mexican side provides unreciprocated financial or in-kind support to its partners (AMEXCID 2019a; AMEXCID 2019b; PM 2019d; PM 2019e; PM 2019f). Accordingly, 'South-South' vocabulary is, if at all, only used scarcely with regard to subregional cooperation (EUM-PR 2011, 8; AMEXCID 2018f). When outlining Mexico's links with Proyecto Mesoamérica and other schemes in Mexico's immediate neighbourhood, official sources rather highlight the regional character of Mexico's engagement as provider (AMEXCID 2018e) and tend to shy away from using 'South-South' terminology (AMEXCID 2018g; AMEXCID 2016a; AMEXCID 2017b; cf. AMEXCID 2018h; AMEXCID 2018i; AMEXCID 2014, 05:26f). As one Mexican official put it, "if South-South means that benefits and responsibilities are shared, then, well, if I'm honest, very little of what we do is actually South-South" (Int-M-26). Despite the rhetorical expansion of 'South-South', Mexico's development cooperation with Central America and the Caribbean follows a rather vertical provider/recipient logic. The bulk of Mexico's cooperation portfolio is thus at odds with the Mexican government's self-assigned definition of South-South as an inherently horizontal modality.

## 'Developing country' status and 'Southern' belonging

Unlike the Mexican definition of South-South cooperation, the official UN definition remains mute on questions of shared costs or the operationalisation of horizontality and 'mutual benefit.' Instead, it frames South-South cooperation as collaboration "involving two or more *developing countries*" in charge of determining the shape and direction of their agendas and initiatives (UNOSSC 2019a, para 1f, emphasis added). Accordingly, questions of 'Southern' belonging are intrinsically linked to 'developing country' assignations. While mainstream development indices – such as those issued by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or UNDP – unequivocally put Mexico and Turkey in categories outside those associated with 'developed countries', the official use of explicit 'developing country' references and the particular assignations employed in multilateral fora point to more complex patterns. In

official Turkish accounts, references to Turkey's 'developing country' status are rare and, if at all, have been used in two ways. On the one hand, notions of Turkey as a 'developing country' or a 'recipient' of international assistance have served for pointing to past realities in order to highlight Turkey's economic and geopolitical transition "from being on the receiving side to the giving side" (TIKA 2012, 3). On the other hand, developing-country references are used to make the case for Turkey's need to access specific international cooperation funds. In a reversal of the official stance in the 1990s on Turkey's classification as 'developed country' under the Kyoto Protocol, the AKP government has tried to obtain a change of status. G77 countries, however, have been opposed, challenging Turkey's proclaimed need – as an OECD country, G20 member and EU accession candidate – to benefit from financial schemes designed to support 'developing countries' (Mathiesen 2017; see Birpınar 2019). The concurrence of these two lines of argument – celebrating strength while highlighting the remaining need for external support – creates some tension, reflected in how different parts of the Turkish bureaucracy frame their engagement.[42] While TIKA and the Turkish Foreign Ministry have promoted Turkey as an increasingly visible and generous donor, government entities in charge of domestic development processes have had other priorities. With regard to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, for instance, bureaucrats at what until 2018 was the *Kalkınma Bakanlığı* [Ministry of Development] have argued that "being a developing country, Turkey needs financial and capacity support in many fields, rather than strengthening [Turkey's] Official Development Assistance (ODA) provider role" (TC-KB 2017, 24).

A similar ambivalence is reflected in debates about ODA graduation, notably in Latin America (UN-ECLAC 2011; UN 2017). In support of Chile and Uruguay – which were scheduled to lose, and indeed lost, ODA eligibility in January 2018 – Mexican representatives were adamant in their insistence that the criteria for graduation from the ODA recipient list should be amended (Int-M-25; Int-M-50; see SRE 2013, para b; OECD 2017a; Constantine and Shankland 2017), and that upper middle-income countries were not automatically in a position to deal with all development-related challenges by themselves (Int-M-22; see Glennie 2011a; Kharas and Rogerson 2017, 24). In interviews, Mexican officials repeatedly mentioned ECLAC's notion of 'structural gaps' (UN-ECLAC 2012; Bárcena 2014) to highlight that "there is no doubt that [middle-income countries] need support, not everywhere, not always, but there is real need"

[42] For details see Haug 2020.

(Int-M-14). AMEXCID representatives have also argued that incoming ODA provides important seed funding for key projects and has the potential of leveraging financial support from other sources (see Garduno 2013). While Mexican accounts have been less pronounced in their rejection of the 'recipient' label and the celebration of national strength, what they share with official Turkish sources is thus the insistence that global economic and political relevance – as reflected in rising income levels or G20 membership, for instance – does not foreclose the legitimate interest in financial development support from abroad.

In terms of more general questions of their relationship with the grand imageries of 'North' and 'South', both Mexican and Turkish officials remain ambivalent.[43] Some Mexican officials struggle with a clear attribution. As one of them told me: "We are part of the South. Well, just outside the South. Sort of. Well. I don't know" (Int-M-6). Another one argued that "sometimes I think we are really desperate to be part of the South, I mean, we *are* part of it, well, sort of, but not really, I mean, we do South-South, that's for sure" (Int-M-13). Turkish officials share some of that confusion. Asked why Turkish rhetoric makes very little mention of Turkey's engagement with 'South-South' cooperation, for instance, one official stated: "To be honest, I don't know. I can only guess. I don't know much about South-South cooperation. Political statements are very weird these days" (Int-T-6). A TIKA desk officer reported:

> We don't really know much about this [South-South cooperation]. It is difficult to follow all the discussions. If they [his superiors] tell me to write South-South in a document I do it. If not, not (Int-T-33).

For these officials, South-South is a trope that is used when others say so, or because they feel that it is expected to be used. Others frame their links with and use of the 'South' in more affirmative ways. As a Mexican diplomat put it, "[w]e are very close to the South, that's for sure. Let's say that we are the first affiliate of the South" (Int-M-12). For a Turkish official who regularly engages with Turkey's development cooperation partners, South-South cooperation

> is an important jargon for us. Everybody is talking about South-South. [South-South cooperation] is, well, a general tool; [it is] not for concrete projects... Our implementing partners are not interested in thinking about South-South cooperation. They just want to get things done (Int-T-11).

For these officials, 'South-South' is a pragmatic label they employ in specific settings and with specific audiences. Mexican officials, in particular, repeatedly use the notion *de alguna manera* [sort of] when trying to capture their ambivalent belonging to the 'South'. Their

[43] Parts of this paragraph are taken from or based on Haug forthcoming.

individual accounts reflect some of the tensions and complexities of Mexican and Turkish patterns of positionality and belonging in international development: at odds with established binaries, dynamics of closeness and distance cut across multi-directional and idiosyncratic approximation processes.

## 5. Approximation as Thirding

This chapter has approached Mexico and Turkey through an Either/Or perspective. As outlined above, Either/Or offers a focus on the particular dynamics that facilitate belonging to one of two categories assumed to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive. When clear assignations are at stake or seem unlikely, a focus on approximation – based on an initial attempt to apply Either/Or to complex realities – points to specific dynamics of closeness and distance. Mexico and Turkey can be said to be part of, or having moved closer to, 'North' or 'South' in different ways and to different extents. As a long-term ODA provider that is perceived as a major donor and has employed DAC-inspired notions of donorship, Turkey could be labelled as 'sort of' part of the 'North' but, at the same time, has visible (if contested) 'Southern' and 'developing country' credentials. As a Latin American country and self-proclaimed 'South-South' provider, Mexico 'sort of' belongs to the 'South' but is closely connected to the 'North' through its membership at and engagement with the OECD. Apart from their lack of DAC and G77 membership, Mexican and Turkish closeness to a given pole often seems substantive, and it requires a closer look at details in order to identify more subtle notions of difference – such as the ways in which Turkish institutions have (re)interpreted and used ODA reporting guidelines, the partial ways in which official Mexican accounts make use of 'South-South' language, or the extent to which Mexican and Turkish officials are confused when it comes to their links with the 'South'. In some ways, Mexico and Turkey can be said to approximate the 'North', and in other ways they approximate the 'South'. From an Either/Or perspective, patterns of approximation are at the core of their engagement and positionalities: they provide concrete insights into why Mexico and Turkey cannot be made to 'signify monolithically'.

The substantial levels of closeness combined with considerable levels of distance that Mexico and Turkey exhibit vis-à-vis the poles of international development undermine the Either/Or claim to congruence and make their approximations a type of Thirding. Instead of falling into either 'North' or 'South', their positionalities are shaped through the idiosyncratic oscillation between closeness and distance to both poles. Depending on the moment and issue at hand, they 'sort of' or 'don't really' fit with the established setup. Both Turkey and Mexico do not belong to the G77 but build on 'South-South' language or platforms in their engagement with international development. They both belong to the OECD, the 'developed countries club', but fall short of 'developed country' status in all mainstream indices. With reference to selective elements of traditional notions of 'South' (or 'North'), Mexican and Turkish approximations are thus 'not really' in line with the clear delineations of categories that have been fundamental components of how the field of international development has traditionally been thought about and represented. While Mexican and Turkish ambiguities do not necessarily suggest that their positionalities should be thought of as belonging to a third category that complements the duality of 'North' and 'South', they do point to fundamental questions about the structuring elements of the field of international development more generally. If OECD membership does not equal 'developed country' status, for instance, and if the formal provision of ODA does not say much about more general alignment with DAC donorship – what is left of notions of the 'North' or the 'developed world' that apparently still carry meaning for many in the field of international development? If G77 membership is not a *sine qua non* for the legitimate participation in 'South-South' schemes, who or what can act as 'gatekeeper' for 'Southern' spaces? Can anyone claim to be 'Southern'? Mexico and Turkey's approximations thus challenge the purity and exclusivity of poles themselves. Approached through official narratives, individual accounts of public officials as well as the ways in which Mexican and Turkish engagement is written about and perceived by their multiple audiences, the traditional poles of international development not only provide key reference points for engagement but also appear, through that engagement, in a different light. Explicit and implicit assumptions about the constitution of these poles are partly reproduced, partly ignored, played with and redefined. Approximation upsets binaries and challenges ordered arrangements through 'not really' misfits and 'sort of' ambiguities.

Mexican and Turkish patterns of approximation-as-Thirding not only undermine idealised constructs of binary poles separately but also challenge the relevance of the logic of Either/Or

more broadly. That Mexico and Turkey seem to be positioned relatively close to (or distant from) 'North' *and* 'South' – and not only to (or from) one of them – challenges the clear separation of poles that stands at the very centre of the Either/Or logic. A conventional Either/Or perspective is simply unable to make sense of the fact that despite its OECD membership, Mexico has become a regional champion of 'South-South' schemes; or that Turkey hosts the UN Expo for South-South Cooperation while also providing ODA. This kind of evidence undermines the implicit assumption that the logic of Either/Or is both necessary and sufficient for analysing questions of positionality and belonging in structured social space. Taken together, insights from Mexico and Turkey thus ask for a more detailed engagement with the approximation dynamics of closeness and distance. More specifically, evidence for *simultaneous closeness* to 'North' and 'South' point to the fragility of binary claims to mutual exclusivity: what about the possibility of being not one *or* the other but *both* at the same time? Insights into the *simultaneous distance* to both poles, in turn, challenge the exhaustiveness of 'North' and 'South': is there space outside the North/South binary that allows identifying or creating positions well *beyond* established categories? These are questions I turn to in the next two chapters.

# Chapter 4.

# Both/And

Like Either/Or, the logic of Both/And takes binaries as reference points. Instead of trying to assign phenomena to one of the existing poles, however, a Both/And perspective asks for the possibility and potential of overcoming divides. Approaching phenomena through Both/And means to ask whether otherwise mutually exclusive elements can merge or coexist, as reflected in Kandinsky's (1946 [1912]) discussion of the colour violet, Haraway's (1991) take on cyborgs, or notions of Twin Spirits, *muxes,* hermaphroditism and intersexuality (*see Chapter 2*). Based on the possibilities of simultaneity and mixing, Both/And also puts a focus on the potential for connecting otherwise disparate poles, and on how links relate to and affect established categories. It is through this Both/And perspective that I approach Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns in this chapter; and while I draw on both case reservoirs, insights from Mexico in particular resonate strongly with Both/And. I first focus on dynamics of simultaneity (section 1) – particularly by analysing official Mexican identity narratives – and then examine how (claims to) duality provide the foundation for engaging in different attempts to connect 'North' and 'South' (section 2). The widespread tendency of viewing combination and connection as positive leads me to examine the ways in which Mexico and Turkey have come to be seen as models or deterrent examples for approaches that heavily draw on Both/And logics (section 3). Finally, I build on the analysis of combining and connecting phenomena to show how Turkish and particularly Mexican Both/And engagement contributes to the Thirding of North/South binaries in international development politics (section 4).

# 1. Simultaneously 'North' and 'South'

Mexico and Turkey's closeness to *both* North and South poses a considerable challenge to Either/Or and points to patterns of belonging at the heart of the logic of Both/And. The ways in which the Mexican and Turkish governments present themselves and are perceived combine elements otherwise seen as pertaining to different poles. Combination is generally defined as a "joining or merging of different parts or qualities in which the component elements are individually distinct" (Oxford Dictionary 2019a, n.p.). The result is a "mixture" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019a, n.p.) or "compound with new properties" (Oxford Dictionary 2019a, n.p.) that reassembles elements otherwise assigned to different categories and may be said to belong simultaneously – at the same time – to both one *and* the other (Cambridge Dictionary 2019b, Merriam Webster 2019a). For Mexico and Turkey, the issue of simultaneous belonging has come up repeatedly with regard to their cultural, geographic or geopolitical positionings. The experience of being part of both Europe and Asia has been a recurring theme in literature on Turkey and Turkey's foreign relations (see Yanık 2011; Donelli and Gonzalez 2018; Chovanec forthcoming); and particularly Turgut Özal has been credited with introducing what has been referred to as the inclusive 'neo-Ottoman' notion of "being at home both in Europe and Asia" (Yavuz 2016, 456) together with a pluralist approach for embracing Turkey's links with all neighbouring regions (see Donelli and Gonzalez 2018).[44] Over the last decades, Turkish decision makers have repeatedly presented Turkey's location "at the crossroads of the Afro-Eurasia landmass" (Donelli and Gonzalez 2016, 93) as an important asset for their engagement with international and regional politics (Cem 2001, 60). At the United Nations, Turkey has been the *only* member state – out of currently 193 – that officially belongs to and "participates fully in" (UN n.d.a, para 8) two of the UN's five regional groupings: not only the Western European and Others Group that includes most DAC donors[45] and in many ways epitomises the 'North', and that Turkey is assigned to for voting purposes, but also the Asia-Pacific Group (including countries from the Middle East), an integral part of the imaginary of a tricontinental 'South'. In terms of formal regional belonging in multilateral politics, Turkey thus epitomises the notion of being both here *and* there.

[44] For a more detailed discussion of Neo-Ottomanism, see Chapter 5.
[45] All major DAC donors except for Japan and South Korea, see UN n.d.; Development Initiatives 2019, 4.

Against the backdrop of international development binaries, simultaneity suggests being at the same time both 'North' and 'South', donor and recipient, provider and receiver. As discussed in the previous chapter, Turkey is not only an increasingly visible provider country but has also remained on the DAC recipient list. In the words of former TIKA President Musa Kulaklıkaya, while Turkey "is still an aid recipient country, it also possesses a strong enough economy to emerge as a rising donor country" (Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010, 133). In terms of assistance data, Turkey has been one of only a handful of countries in the world that both receive and provide development cooperation formally reported as ODA.[46] Due to the Turkish government's proactive engagement with DAC-set methodologies, the OECD has, since 1990, published numbers on the ODA Turkey receives and provides. Turkey's ODA 'balance sheet' indicates that the ratio between incoming and outgoing flows has been fluctuating considerably, and that Turkey has at times provided more and sometimes less than it received (*see Annex 3.2.1*).

For Mexico, this kind of 'balance sheet' is more difficult to produce because it has not reported its outgoing assistance flows as ODA (*see Annex 3.1.1*). The simultaneity of receiving and providing, however, has stood out as the main thread of how official accounts present Mexico's position and role in international development politics. Already in the early 1950s – at the incipient stages of the field of international development – the Mexican Foreign Ministry stated that:

> the government of Mexico has always expressed its reiterated faith in technical cooperation and its hope for taking up increasing levels of participation in activities of *providing and receiving* technical assistance (1953; cited in Figueroa 2017, 67; emphasis added).

During the initial discussions surrounding what would later become the UN development system, a Mexican representative referred to the "inconvenient divisionary line between countries that receive and those that give technical assistance" to highlight that Mexico "appears in the list of countries receiving technical assistance … and in the [list] of contributors" (1953, quoted in Figueroa 2017, 68). This was also taken up in the heyday of Mexico's engagement with Third World discussions in the 1970s when President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) emphasized that Mexico was not only a developing country but had "reached intermediate levels of progress" and was ready to "adopt… concrete measures …

[46] The other four countries are Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Thailand and Timor Leste (OECD 2019k; OECD 2018c); see Chapter 6.

benefitting countries of, in relative terms, lesser economic development" (Echeverría 1972, n.p.). Mexico's readiness to support "the idea of solidarity with developing countries" (Castañeda 1980, n.p.) beyond its preoccupation with national development processes continued in statements of Echeverría's successor José López Portillo (1976-1982) and his cabinet (González 1984, 331).

To date, all of Mexico's National Development Plans (published since 1983 at the beginning of each six-year presidential cycle), in one way or another, have emphasized that Mexico's engagement with international cooperation arrangements is dedicated to the "economic strengthening of developing countries," on the one hand, and "a growing access to the benefits of [international] cooperation for reaching national [development] targets", on the other (EUM-PR 1983, 8.12.4.4; see EUM-PR 1989, 17; EUM-PR 1989, 47; EUM-PR 1995, para 1.3.3; EUM-PR 2001, 63; EUM-PR 2007, 295). The National Development Plan put forward by the Peña Nieto government (2013-2018) includes a particular emphasis on international cooperation, highlighting that the simultaneity of receiving and providing combines Mexico's commitments towards both the Mexican population and the wider world. On the one hand, Mexico is poised to expand its role as development cooperation provider (particularly with regard to Latin America) and thus live up to or put into practice its "global responsibility" (EUM-PR 2013, 89; SRE 2014a, ob-2). On the other hand, the Plan also expects Mexico to continue receiving support in areas of strategic importance for domestic processes, notably through bilateral development cooperation agencies from European 'partners', and thus connect its expanding global engagement with benefits for domestic structures and processes (SRE 2014a, ob-3).

The simultaneity of receiving and providing is also at the core of Mexico's 2011 International Development Cooperation Act (EUM-PR 2011, 1-3), the authoritative legal framework on the matter approved under Peña Nieto's predecessor Felipe Calderón (2006-2012), and runs through most – if not all – official pronunciations on Mexico's identity in international development. As arguably the most visible and accessible formal communication tool for Mexico's engagement, AMEXCID's website states:

> Through AMEXCID, Mexico offers and receives development cooperation. On the one hand, we share successful experiences, strengthen capacities and exchange human, technical and financial resources with developing countries, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean. On the other hand, we work with strategic partners to expand our capacities,

> improve our institutions and generate tangible results that strengthen Mexico (AMEXCID 2018a, para 3).

In one way or the other, the simultaneity of provision and reception as a Mexican key characteristic has been used in articles, speeches or statements by all Executive Directors of the IMEXCI (1998-2000) and since 2011 the AMEXCID (Lozoya 2001; Berruga 2000; Granguillhome 2012; Valle 2013; Valle 2014; Casar 2016; García-Lopez 2018), all Foreign Ministers that have overseen the institutionalisation of Mexico's international development cooperation since the 1990s (Green 2014; Espinoza 2011; Meade 2014; Ruiz-Massieu 2015; Videgaray 2017), and also by President Peña Nieto who referred to Mexico as "a nation that receives and provides international cooperation" in what was his only presidential speech exclusively dedicated to the topic of international development cooperation (Peña Nieto 2014, 4).

Beyond written (and/or spoken) accounts, there has also been a visual component supposed to capture Mexico's simultaneity of 'providing and receiving': The official logo of AMEXCID – unveiled in 2015 – combines the three colours of the Mexican flag. The only letter in red is the 'X'; and around a white circle, purportedly representing Mexico (Int-M-10; Int-M-17), the legs of the 'X' reach out to the world, supposedly connecting the receiving and providing levels (two legs out of four, respectively, are connected to each other). In different versions – but usually displayed in red or presented against a red background – the reaching-to-all-sides 'X' has become the reference symbol for Mexico's position in the field of international development (*see Annex 5.1*).

## A neat formula: the notion of duality

Over the last years, an increasingly popular way of framing the simultaneity of providing and receiving assistance in international development circles has been to employ the terminology of *duality* (OECD 2008; Smith 2011; Bracho 2015, 26f; Alonso et al. 2016; Gulrajani and Swiss 2017, 13; OECD 2017b, n.p.). Stemming from the Latin word 'duo' ('two'), the term 'dual' means consisting of "two parts, elements, or aspects" (Oxford Dictionary 2019b, n.p.). References to 'duality' have been used to describe "a situation in which two opposite ideas or feelings exist at the same time" (Collins 2019a, n.p.). Duality thus puts a particular focus on

the "opposition or contrast" (Oxford Dictionary 2019b, n.p.) between two elements or aspects that exist simultaneously or are contained in one phenomenon.

While general references to Turkey's "double identity" or "dual identity as both a Middle Eastern and European country" (Keyman 2016, 2281) abound, I have only found one account that explicitly uses duality terminology with regard to Turkey's position in international development: in a 2008 piece on Turkish development cooperation, then-TIKA President Hakan Fidan argued that Turkey had a "dual identity both as a donor and a recipient country" (Fidan and Nurdun 2008, 94). In Mexico, by contrast, duality has become one of the most poignant ways in which official accounts have framed Mexico's engagement with international development. The extensive range of consulted sources suggests that it was in the late 1990s – following Mexico's shift from the G77 to the OECD – that duality terminology emerged as a rhetorical tool to frame Mexico's position in the international development sphere. To my knowledge the first available Mexican account that makes use of duality terminology is an article authored by Enrique Berruga, Executive Director of IMEXCI, who argued that

> from an international perspective, Mexico is a hinge country, dual, and therefore a particularly valuable, peculiar and paradigmatic country [and it is] in keeping with that duality that Mexico's cooperation policy has two essential goals: promote a stable and peaceful international environment and support national development efforts (Berruga 2000, 253f; see Lozoya 2001, 937).

The 2013-2018 Sectoral Programme for External Relations and the 2014-2018 International Development Cooperation Programme (PROCID) – the key strategy documents for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mexico's development cooperation, respectively – have so far been the most high-level government documents to use 'duality' terminology (SRE 2013, para-b; SRE 2014a, para II and para I.3; cf. EUM-PR 2011; EUM-PR 2013; see AMEXCID 2012). Over the last years, duality references have become an integral part of how Mexico's positionality is introduced or referred to in official guidelines and reports (SRE 2014b; AMEXCID 2015b; AMEXCID 2017a; AMEXCID 2018j; SRE 2018a), deliberations at the Mexican Senate (Flores 2016; see EUM-S 2012) as well as accounts by senior officials published in the Foreign Ministry journal (Green 2014; Valle 2014; Figueroa 2014; Borbolla 2014; Escanero and González 2014), newspapers (Valle 2013; Ruiz-Massieu 2015) and books (Valle et al. 2015; Figueroa 2017). For Mexico, 'duality' has thus become the terminology of choice for capturing questions of positionality. Circumventing questions of organisational membership at the DAC or the G77, it captures a *de facto* belonging to both camps – donors and recipients, North and South. As a

condensed version of the simultaneity of receiving and providing, it offers a neat formula for a Both/And approach and has provided the rhetorical foundation for attempts by the Mexican government to carve out institutional space in international development fora.

## 2. Connecting 'North' and 'South'

Based on the notion of simultaneous belonging, a Both/And perspective also asks for the ways in which seemingly disparate poles get connected. The Latin term 'connectere' translates as 'binding together', and 'to connect' has come to mean to associate, join, relate or "bring … into contact so that a … link is established" (Oxford Dictionary 2019c, n.p.; see Collins 2019b). A particularly prominent image and metaphor for expressing the idea of connection has been the bridge. In the more immediate sense, a bridge refers to "a structure that spans and provides a passage over a road, railway, river, or some other obstacle" (Collins 2019c, n.p.). Figurately, it can also refer to "something resembling a bridge in form or function" (Merriam Webster 2019d, n.p.). In this more abstract sense, "[s]omething that bridges the gap between two very different things has some of the qualities of each of these things" (Collins 2019c, n.p.). In line with the above discussion of duality and concurrence of receiving and providing, the sharing of elements of both phenomena provides the condition for bridging functions. Building on the simultaneity of being both here and there, a bridge is understood to be "a time, place, or means of connection or transition" (Merriam Webster 2019d, n.p.) that is "intended to reconcile … two seemingly incompatible things" (Oxford Dictionary 2019d, n.p.). To bridge a gap between two phenomena or entities thus means to "reduce the distance" (Collins 2019d, n.p.) between them.

Defying the clear separation between poles inherent to Either/Or, bridge-related Both/And notions have been of recurrent use in (the analysis of) multilateral affairs (UNDP-SPTCDC 1978, 2; Robins 2014, 25). In Turkey, journalists, academics and writers have repeatedly referred to the Turkish government as "a bridge between the East and the West" (Sevin 2012, n.p.) or "the Western world and non-Western world" (Hosoya 2018, n.p.), particularly between Europe and, respectively, the Middle East, Asia or the 'Islamic world' (Yılmaz 2009;

Modebadze and Sayın 2015; Kara and Sözen 2016, 58; Yegin 2019). It was, again, under the leadership of Özal, who built a more proactive and expansive foreign policy agenda on references to Turkey's Ottoman legacy (Yavuz 2016), that bridge notions became more popular (Kara and Sözen 2016, 58; see Bozdaglioğlu 2004, 103f). While the East/West binary has traditionally been the core reference for Turkey's in-betweenness in geographical or cultural terms, Buğra Süsler has highlighted that it was Ahmet Davutoğlu (Foreign Minister 2009-2014; Prime Minister 2014-2016) who "often emphasised that Turkey has access to both the global north and south" (Süsler 2019, 9), pointing to Turkey's potential connecting function as "a bridge between the developed and developing world" (Donelli and Levaggi 2016, 109) or as the builder of "bridges for cooperation among developed and developing states" (Bozdağ 2012, 4).

Bridge terminology has also been used extensively for making sense of Mexican international engagement. The idea of Mexico as a "bridge… in the dialogue between continents and economic regions" (EUM-PR 1995, para 1.3.3) has been employed for decades. It builds on Mexico's role as broker in multilateral processes in the 1970s and 1980s (Green 1984; Figueroa 2017, 134) and on the widely shared impression that Mexico, in the words of former Minister of Foreign Affairs José Antonio Meade (2012-2015), has long been

> a country of multiple belongings, simultaneously Latin American, Central American and North American; a multi-ethnic and pluricultural country with profound indigenous and European roots, inheritor of valuable legacies of Africa and the Middle East; a country with growing links to Asia and the Pacific (Meade 2013, n.p.).

It is this notion of Mexico's 'multiple belongings' that has provided the foundation for government officials expressing support for Mexico's role as regional, cross-regional or multilateral bridge (Castañeda 2002; Berruga 2001; Videgaray 2018; see Maihold 2016). With reference to the bridge as recurring trope for making sense of both countries' positionalities, this section focuses on how Mexico and Turkey's simultaneous belonging provides the foundation and is used for connecting – or bridging – 'North' and 'South' in development cooperation schemes and multilateral development fora.

## Strategic recipients

While incoming development assistance had played a decreasing and overall rather negligible role for Mexico and Turkey in the 1990s and early 2000s, the last decade has seen a

remarkable upward trend in ODA allocations that stands in contrast not only to both countries' previous reception patterns but also to a general tendency where ODA to upper middle-income countries has decreased substantially (World Bank 2019g; *see Annex 3.3*). Turkey's largest donor, by far, has been the EU (*see Annex 3.2.7*). In addition to what Homi Kharas and Andrew Rogerson (2017, 24) have referred to as migration-related "aid for mutual strategic purposes" – notably under the so-called 2016 EU-Turkey Refugee Deal (*see Chapter 5*) – a major factor accounting for the increase in incoming ODA has been EU pre-accession funding set to accompany Turkey's "progressive compliance with EU rules and policies" (Welcome Europe 2019, n.p.; see OECD 2019g). Allocated in six-year cycles to support 'reforms in preparation for Union membership', part of the funding through the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance dedicated to socio-economic development processes counts as ODA (see EC 2019). While the rationale has thus been to support the reshaping of Turkish institutions in light of EU policies and standards, the underlying motivation for engaging in membership negotiations was shaped by expectations about the "economic and political advantages that Turkey's EU membership would have" (Gerhards and Hans 2011, 763). Turkey was not only said to add demographic and economic potential to EU economies but also act as a "unique case" (Keyman 2016, 2282) in symbolic and practical terms to increase the EU's global reach and relevance. Those in favour of Turkey's accession have highlighted the country's important links to the Middle East, the Caucasus and different parts of Asia, as well as its potential as a much-needed energy transit space (Modebadze and Sayin 2015) and "an outreach to the Muslim world" (Kaymakcı 2019, n.p.). Providing Turkey with pre-accession ODA has thus also been a way of investing in a long-term relationship where Turkey's connecting function has been one among a range of reasons to contemplate accession in the first place.

This notion of a potential future 'link to the world' as part of the rationale for providing ODA has also been visible in how traditional donors have approached Mexico as a recipient. Germany and France are currently Mexico's top bilateral ODA donors (OECD 2019h; see Annex 3.1.4). They have increased their ODA since 2010 based on a general interest in expanding relations with a country they have identified as an increasingly important player in the Americas (Int-M-17; Int-N-53; see Banchón 2018).[47] As regional 'anchor country' (BMZ 2019), Mexico is perceived as a key partner across a range of global issue areas, with a particular focus on projects related to the environment and climate change. According to French and

[47] On ODA flows from the US to Mexico, see Chapter 5.

German government officials, the expansion of bilateral cooperation is seen as a long-term investment in mutually beneficial relations in the region and beyond, where Mexico is said to play an important connecting role (Int-G-2; Int-G-28; see Int-N-53). In this context, questions of 'transitioning away' from ODA (see Calleja and Prizzon 2019) have not been tabled. "There has been no talk about transition [in Mexico], and they aren't transitioning at all," a think tank expert conducting a study on DAC donor transition stated in an interview. "To the contrary: line ministries and government agencies … are not allowed to take up loans anymore and are actually really interested in [ODA] grants" (Int-N-53).

The recent surge in ODA to Mexico has also been accompanied by bilateral and multilateral agencies trying to establish direct links with AMEXCID beyond traditional coordination processes. Since 2012, a range of DAC donors – not only Germany and the US but also Japan, the United Kingdom and Spain – and UN agencies have tried to position themselves as AMEXCID's 'partners of choice'. During the first years of its existence, in particular, AMEXCID was perceived as "the new kid on the bloc" (Int-G-31), the increasingly visible and active development agency of one of the 'rising powers', interestingly positioned as an OECD member with developing country credentials (Int-G-32; Int-G-42; Int-IO-16; Int-IO-29). As a fellow OECD member, Mexico was a somewhat familiar player for DAC donors and thus provided a low threshold for "getting their foot in the door" (Int-N-12; Int-G-17; Int-IO-24). This has proven to be of particular relevance for those donor agencies with long-term strategic interests in Mexico, such as the German *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (Corporation for International Cooperation, GIZ), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through secondments and capacity building programmes, they have expressed interest in investing resources to establish partnerships that may contribute to strengthening their own standing in a changing development cooperation landscape (Int-G-18; Int-G-29; Int-G-31). Beyond short-term benefits, traditional donor agencies have wanted to ensure a link to the "players of tomorrow" (Int-G-19); and Mexico has been perceived as a partner of rising (regional) relevance and "our gate to Latin America" (Int-G-44).

In terms of their recipient roles, Mexico and Turkey thus receive increasing levels of ODA not despite but *because* of the (perceived) increase of their capacity: as up-and-coming players they are part of a limited group of large middle-income countries that traditional donors have identified as 'strategic partners'. The multiple belongings attached to their in-between

positionalities – and their connections cutting across various inter-regional or intra-regional fault lines – have made Mexico and Turkey particularly strategic ODA recipients. For a range of major DAC donors, the increase in development-related funding today is seen as a long-term investment in the capacity of 'rising players' that are supposed to expand and strengthen 'Northern' links with tomorrow's world. Maybe counterintuitively, an increase in ODA – traditionally associated with a feature of low-ranking positions in international development hierarchies – has been an indicator for or reflection of Mexico and Turkey's perceived rise in international relevance. From a 'Northern' perspective, both countries are seen as allies in an increasingly complex set of geopolitical and geo-economic fields of power and wealth.

## Triangular hinges

Mexico and Turkey have not only become 'strategic recipients' but have also increased their engagement with so-called 'triangular' schemes, acting as intermediaries between established donor institutions and recipient country governments. In 1995, a UN committee defined triangular cooperation as a scheme where "donor countries can utilize the services of developing countries with the requisite capacity to deliver a technical cooperation input to another developing country on a cost-effective basis;" and it put forward the term "pivotal countries" to refer to players with that 'requisite capacity' for assistance (UN 1995, 21). While traditional donors or multilateral bodies are thought to support cooperation schemes through funding or training (UNOSSC 2019a), pivotal countries take on bridging functions between 'Northern' and 'Southern' realities. Instead of simply 'being utilised' by traditional donors to make processes more 'cost-effective', however, a pivotal country usually also "has proven experience [in development assistance] and shares its resources, knowledge and expertise" (Piefer and Casado-Asensio 2018, 26) based on its own experience with domestic development processes.

Both Mexico and Turkey have been identified as pivotal countries (UN 1995, 7f) and "key players in triangular co-operation" (OECD 2013a, 5); and with regard to both countries, the notion of 'hinge' has been used to make sense of their engagement with multilateral cooperation (Parma 2002; Ruiz 2009; A. Barnett 2006; Ballinas et al. 2018).[48] As 'hinges',

[48] The Spanish *país bisagra* has gained some popularity whereas the Turkish *menteşe ülkesi* has been used less (cf. Tarakçı 2008). On hinge countries, see Deman 2006; CIDOB 2007; Drevet 2011; Ercolani 2019.

Mexico and Turkey are a "determining factor" (Merriam Webster 2019d, n.p.) for multilateral arrangements in as far as they join otherwise separate parts and – like hinges that allow doors to "open and close" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019, n.p.) or "swing freely" (Collins 2019d, n.p.) – enable and improve the smooth evolution of inter-governmental or multilateral collaboration. The engagement as intermediaries of "moving back and forth in the middle area between two sides" (Merriam Webster 2019f, n.p.) makes hinges a "central or pivotal point … on which everything depends" (Oxford Dictionary 2019e, n.p.). Like brokers, they have the potential of "shap[ing] the spaces between providers and recipients of development assistance" (Haug 2019, 157). At least in theory, triangular schemes are thus a concrete expression of Mexico and Turkey's relative closeness to both 'developing regions' and the OECD world. As intermediaries between donors and recipients, and through their connections with both sides, they are hoped to contribute to "more efficient and effective delivery of development assistance" (McEwan and Mawdsley 2012, 1991).

With reference to its "strategic location at the crossroads of different continents" (UNOSSC 2017, para 2), Turkey has become an increasingly thought-after pivotal for triangular schemes. As Jeannine Hausmann (2014, 2) argues, "the good training of … Turkish personnel", on the one hand, and "the relatively fresh experiences of Turkey with certain development problems", on the other, combined with the "cultural access that Turkey has to countries in neighbouring regions" have been key reasons for Turkey's attractiveness as pivotal. This is also what Turkish officials have repeatedly highlighted in multilateral fora. In the words of Feridun Hadi Sinirlioğlu (2007, para 6), former and current Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Turkey has been "reinforce[ing] its emerging donor country status at the global and regional level" due to its own recent domestic development trajectory:

> Being a country transformed from an agriculture-based economy to a trade and industry-based economy, Turkey has a lot to share with the countries that are in the same process … TİKA cooperates with other bilateral donors, as well as multilateral donors, thereby facilitating a more effective implementation process … in partnership with recipient countries from the South, alongside cooperation with a third party from the North.

Concrete triangular cooperation schemes with Turkish involvement usually include short and one-off training programmes in a variety of sectors, from laparoscopic surgery to aquaculture or disaster prevention (TIKA 2016b; 2019a). Together with JICA, TIKA has set up trainings for representatives from Turkey's neighbours as well as for Muslim-majority countries further afield, from Sudan to Yemen, Myanmar and the Philippines (TIKA 2016b, 21; TIKA 2019a).

While the nature of these short and often isolated interventions does not allow for much more than counting the numbers of sessions or participants to provide a very rough idea of the impact trainings might have had (Int-G-29; see JICA 2018), JICA argues that the advantage of collaborating with Turkish counterparts is not only the strong capacity of Turkish institutions and that "trainees from … third countries are very impressed by the hospitality of Turkish people" but, above all, the similarity between the Turkish context and that of partner countries which makes it "more efficient to learn the good practices in Turkey … rather than [opt for] direct technical transfer from Japan" (JICA 2018, para 3).

The main focus of Turkish engagement with triangular cooperation, however, has not been directed at individual DAC donors but at multilateral bodies where – as Turkish officials highlighted during interviews – "we are more visible than if we [cooperate] with European countries [as] they are too big, and their approach is different from ours" (Int-T-7; see Int-T-20; Int-T-33; *see Chapter 5*) . Turkey established the OECD Multilateral Tax Centre in Ankara in 1993 to collaborate with the OECD on supporting countries in neighbouring regions (OECD 2019i) and, in a similar vein, has collaborated with the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation through their sub-regional office for Central Asia that opened in Ankara in 2006 (FAO 2019). The Turkish government has also set up joint projects with other UN entities in the region, including the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the World Intellectual Property Organisation, and most recently the International Labour Organisation for an initiative on decent work for Syrians through exchanges with Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (ILO 2019; UN-Turkey 2019).

Turkey's most far-reaching triangular engagement has been with the UNDP and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).[49] According to officials at TIKA and the Ministry of Development, collaboration on third-country initiatives with these two entities "has built on the work they have done in Turkey for decades; they know us, we know them" (Int-T-22). Collaboration with UNDP on Turkey's outgoing development assistance began in the 1990s. Different phases of a TIKA-UNDP umbrella project (1998-2016) provided the framework for strengthening the capacity of TIKA itself and working on joint projects abroad, sometimes via Turkish in-kind contributions but mainly through training programmes, seminars, workshops and study tours

[49] While UNDP is an integral part of the UN development system, IsDB is a multilateral development bank associated with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, explicitly focusing on supporting "Muslim communities" in development-related processes (IsDB 2019, para 1).

(Sinirlioğlu 2007; TIKA 2016b). The arguably most important tool for triangular schemes with UNDP has been the Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development, one of UNDP's six global policy centres that opened its doors in Istanbul in 2011 as part of a major expansion of Turkey's partnership with UNDP (Int-IO-3; Int-IO-33; see UNDP 2017; *see Annex 6.4*). One key focus of the Centre has been to build on the experience of Turkish small and medium enterprises in order to promote the role of private sector entities as "an under-tapped modality for sustainable development" (UNOSSC 2019b, n.p.).

With IsDB, in turn, the Turkish government has engaged in a range of projects in Muslim countries, from on-the-job trainings for meteorology experts in Pakistan (Rafi 2018) to capacity building measures for a medical school in The Gambia or cotton cultivation in Bangladesh (TIKA 2018b). According to a TIKA official I interviewed, working with the IsDB has allowed to build on synergies: "we are interested in the same countries; they provide money … we are on the ground; a great match" (Int-T-10). IsDB (2018, 6), in turn, has highlighted that it was the Turkish government's "enthusiasm to share the country's knowledge, expertise, technology and resources with other developing countries" that proved to be a crucial push for "[t]he search within IsDB for a more enhanced [South-South cooperation] mechanism." Turkey was also the first country for IsDB to identify so-called resource centres that, for specific issue areas, now provide expertise for triangular cooperation projects (IsDB 2018, 10). Turkey has thus helped to midwife the Bank's own approach for how to "play the role of an enabler" (IsDB 2018, 6) and, as for UNDP, has been an important intermediary to expand and consolidate engagement with triangular schemes.

Like Turkey, Mexico was early on identified as a pivotal country, and it has been among the most active partners for triangular schemes in Latin America; a region that, overall, has often been referred to as the most dynamic space for triangular cooperation (OECD 2013a, 9; Piefer and Casado-Asensio 2018, 26). For the Mexican government, "[p]romoting triangular co-operation is a strategic tool to strengthen our capacities beyond our traditional areas of action, and beyond our own individual capabilities" (Casar 2016, n.p.). Mexico's cooperation with UN entities across Latin America and beyond has been substantive – including a sub-regional scheme for monitoring development goals in Central America, for instance (AMEXCID 2016d) – even though most initiatives have been rather lean one-off study tours or capacity building measures (UNDP-AMEXCID 2015). Mexico has also set up triangular schemes with DAC donors, particularly Japan and Germany. JICA early on identified Mexico as a 'pivotal

country' and key ally for development projects in Central America (JICA 2013). Like Turkey, Mexico has collaborated with Japan on disaster resilience as both countries share "earthquakes as a common geographical challenge." One project, for instance, has focused on building materials for earthquake-resistant low-income housing in El Salvador (GPEDC 2015, n.p.). Since 2003, JICA and the Mexican Foreign Ministry have collaborated under the Japan-Mexico Partnership Programme as a framework dedicated to triangular schemes (JICA 2019a). While the number of long-term projects has been low (JICA 2019b), the bulk of activities under the joint framework has focused on training programmes similar to those set up with TIKA in Turkey (SRE 2018b). According to JICA (n.d., n.p.), triangular cooperation combines and "takes advantage of Mexico's technical cooperation experience and that of Japan as ODA provider."

AMEXCID and GIZ, in turn, have presented their triangular cooperation as a way to "expand the synergies and experiences" (GIZ 2015, n.p.) of their bilateral initiatives and explore collaboration across Central America as well as with South American countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador or Peru (GIZ 2019a). In addition to joint technical cooperation initiatives, for German partners, the Mexican government has been a key ally to explore new cooperation formats (GIZ 2019b); and collaborating with Mexico has provided the opportunity to deepen engagement with players beyond the DAC. As a GIZ official stated during an interview:

> We really work well with Mexico. They are interested in collaboration; they really want to partner with us. I'd even say that worldwide Mexico is our partner number one for triangular schemes (Int-G-31).

With German partners and others, Mexico has also been actively engaged in multilateral coordination processes on triangular cooperation, particularly at the OECD and the GPEDC (OECD 2013b). The Mexican government hosted one of the first OECD-sponsored multilateral meetings on triangular cooperation in 2009 (OECD 2019j) and, since 2016, Mexican representatives have been part of a multi-stakeholder initiative that promotes triangular schemes as "an excellent example of how all development actors work together …by… going beyond the North-South divide on a very practical level" (GPEDC 2017, 1).

Whether triangular cooperation actually lives up to the promise of more effective cooperation – not only in terms of the concrete impact of initiatives on the ground but also with regard to interaction dynamics – often remains unclear. As detailed project or financial data is mostly unavailable or difficult to compare (see McEwan and Mawdsley 2012, 1200; OECD 2016c), macro studies and reports dealing with triangular cooperation tend to provide (descriptive)

insights into concrete initiatives or provide the number of activities and projects to give a rough idea of macro patterns (see OECD 2013b; OECD 2016c). JICA, for instance, highlights that as of 2018, it had "trained 937 Latin American experts through [193] international courses" (Kitaoka 2018, n.p.) together with Mexican counterparts and, in collaboration with TIKA, had organised 77 training courses for "a total of 1094 participants from 34 different countries" (JICA 2018, n.p.). Based on this limited data, both Mexico and Turkey have been prominent partners for triangular schemes in international comparison. The particular combination of institutional capacity, 'developing country' legitimacy, and their cultural closeness to countries in neighbouring regions and beyond (Latin America and the Caribbean for Mexico, and the 'Islamic world' for Turkey) make both countries triangular hinges *par excellence* in the eyes of their multilateral or DAC member partners.

## Facilitators, hosts and champions

The intermediary or brokering functions of hinges are closely related to the concept of facilitation. Going back to the Latin term 'facilis' (easy to do), facilitating means to "make easier" or "assist the progress of" a given process (Collins 2019e, n.p.; see Haug 2019). On the one hand, facilitation refers to increasing the likelihood of something to happen – achieving a result or reaching a compromise, for instance (Collins 2019e). On the other hand, it can also mean to contribute to "making something possible" (Cambridge Dictionary 2019e, n.p.) in the first place. Facilitation thus comes with connotations of both enabling and improving (Haug 2019, 156f) and is thus closely connected to notions of bridging that focus on making "a difference between two groups smaller or less significant" or, more specifically, "[p]romot[ing] friendly relations between groups" (Oxford Dictionary 2019f). At different moments and across issue areas, the governments of both Mexico and Turkey have repeatedly taken on facilitating roles in contexts of inter-governmental tensions. In the first decade of AKP rule (post-2002), in particular, the Turkish government engaged in a range of mediating processes, particularly in its neighbourhood and in negotiations between the 'West' and Iran over nuclear issues (Robins 2014; Keyman 2016; Süsler 2019; Ebrahimi et al. 2017). Mexico, in turn, used to play a "generally accepted broker role" during conflicts and peace processes in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s (Maihold 2016, 548; see Toussaint Ribot 2014), and the Mexican government has tried to build on this trajectory with more recent attempts to

facilitate negotiations between opposing sides in Venezuela and Nicaragua (Salinas 2019; BBC 2019). This engagement provides the context for how the Mexican and Turkish governments have tried to engage with multilateral development processes.

At the UN, both countries have taken on institutionalized facilitating roles at the General Assembly's Second Committee where development-related resolutions are tabled (*see Chapter 3*). At the Second Committee, North/South divisions have been particularly palpable, as the 134 member states of the G77 have managed to put up a united front on most issues against the 'North' (see Mminele 2015; Muchhala 2015; Aboulatta 2018). According to interviews with representatives from UN member states and a range of UN bodies that regularly participate in Committee meetings, Turkey has stood out as facilitator of the LDC resolution that is tabled annually (see UN 2014). Appointed by the Committee Chair for the negotiation of a draft resolution, representatives of a facilitator country are in charge of assisting member states to identify common ground when debating the initial draft (see UN 2019b). Whereas Turkey has been said to be a "formidable facilitator" (Int-IO-18) for the Least Developed Countries resolution but a rather reluctant player on other Second Committee processes (Int-IO-21; Int-IO-27; Int-G-47; *see Chapter 5*), Mexico is widely perceived as a "a go-to country" (Int-IO-25) for brokering agreements on all sorts of issues. While countries outside established groupings like the G77 or the EU usually speak for themselves, Mexico is often selected as voice representing issue-specific coalitions (see UN 2019c). As one G77 diplomat put it:

> If there is one country I would go to in order to fix things or bring people together, it'd probably be Mexico; they are really good at bringing people together, also … across all these entrenched divides (Int-G-4).

This coincides with broader analyses of Mexican foreign policy arguing that Mexico has "always tried to maintain a middle way, as an agreeable voice and a helpful fixer" (Maihold 2016, 545). One of the most visible recent examples of Mexico's efforts to identify common ground in development-related processes was Mexico's appointment, in 2016, as co-facilitator of what was to become the Global Compact for Migration, "the first-ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration" that put a particular focus on the linkages between migration and development processes (UN n.d.b, para 3). While Bangladesh had initially been identified as the 'Southern' co-facilitator for the Compact (Int-G-5; Int-IO-18), the President of the UN General Assembly decided to give that role to Mexico

(MADE 2016), reflecting – as a European diplomat put it – Mexico's "excellent reputation as a problem shooter" (Int-G-32). Against the backdrop of rising tensions over the Compact's content between countries of origin, most of them part of the G77, and representatives from a small but influential group of 'Northern' countries, particularly Hungary and the US, the Mexican Permanent Mission and its 'Northern' co-facilitator Switzerland organized a range of thematic consultation meetings and led six rounds of complex negotiations. After the adoption of the Compact, they were commended for having made an outstanding contribution to what was celebrated as "a historic victory for the UN" (Rush 2018, n.p.; Lacy Swing 2018).

In the leadup to Compact negotiations, the Mexican government had not only organised national civil society consultations in Mexico City but also hosted – and paid for (UN-GA 2017) – the Global Compact's preparatory stocktaking conference (Risse 2017; IOM 2016; UN 2016; IOM 2017a; IOM 2017b). This hosting of meetings and events dedicated to specific development-related issues has been another popular way for the Mexican and Turkish governments to facilitate – enable and improve – multilateral processes. Both Mexico and Turkey have become popular destinations for major international diplomacy events related to development, from G20 meetings (Mexico in 2012 and Turkey in 2015) and the UN Climate Change conference in 2010 (Cancún) to the fourth LDC conference in 2011 (Istanbul), the 2016 LDC mid-term review (Antalya), the 2014 high-level meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (Mexico City), the UN Biological Diversity conference in 2016 (Mexico City), as well as the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (Istanbul) or the 2017 UN South-South Expo (Antalya). As with their facilitating and brokering functions, Mexico and Turkey's readiness to act as conference hosts has been welcomed across the board. Through the course of interviews in New York and Paris, I collected a long list of references to Mexican and Turkish hospitality as "very professional" (Int-IO-26), "outstanding" (Int-IO-11) or "extraordinary" (Int-G-17). As one UN diplomat put it:

> I think we've all been to Mexico at least once over the last year, for some climate change negotiation meeting or whatever it is. Mexico hosts things all the time, and they are great at it, they go out of their way to make sure that people come and enjoy [their stay] (Int-IO-16).

While facilitation and hosting contain notions of providing a framework for others and often include the idea of accompanying a process without playing an overt protagonist role, both Mexico and Turkey have tended to take an explicitly involved stance on multilateral issues

they have engaged with. More often than not, they have combined facilitating or hosting functions with attempts to proactively champion specific issues or platforms. Often used in multilateral settings (see A. King 2018; UN 2019d; Patrick 2019), the term 'champion' stems from the Latin term *campio* [fighter] and has come to mean to vigorously, militantly or enthusiastically support or defend a cause (Oxford Dictionary 2019g; Merriam Webster 2019g). The most visible and far-reaching framework for development-related questions at the global level, and thus a prime reference for championing efforts, has been Agenda 2030 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mexico and Turkey were both part of the initial group of 50 countries selected to conduct national consultations (UNDP-Turkey 2013; EUM-PR 2015), and the governments of both countries were actively engaged with statistical questions as 'early movers' in the leadup to the launch of the agenda (Friends of the Chair Group 2013; TC-KB 2016, 34). Mexico and Turkey also sent a representative to the Secretary General's high-level panel in 2013, joined the Open Working Group in 2014 and 2015 that came up with the initial SDG draft, and were among the first countries to present voluntary national reviews on SDG implementation in 2016 (UN-DESA 2019b; UN-DESA 2019c; see Villanueva 2017; Haug 2020).

During the post-2015 preparation process, diplomats and UN officials referred to Mexico in particular as one of the "most engaged countries in its support for the setup and implementation of the SDGs" (Int-IO-23; see Villanueva 2017). In addition to a general engagement that, in the words of a Mexican diplomat, "showed that we really meant to implement the [National Development Plan] idea of 'global responsibility'" (Int-M-20), the Mexican government also hosted and co-organised regional and thematic consultations as well as three international multi-stakeholder workshops that focused on questions of social and economic inclusion (INEGI n.d.; see Villanueva 2017). This focus on cross-cutting programmatic engagement has carried through to the SDG implementation phase. With – at least on paper – an elaborate institutional setup for domestic implementation coordination, the Mexican government has set out to "reach a state-wide commitment to SDG implementation that reaches all levels of government" (INEGI n.d., para 1) and was among only four countries to present a second voluntary national review on SDG implementation in 2018 (UN-DESA 2019d). At the G20 Developing Working Group, Mexico has proactively engaged with peer-learning schemes on SDG implementation (Villanueva and Vega 2019, 635f), and, at the regional level, has become a key voice on Agenda 2030 in Latin America and

the Caribbean. It was through the 2016 'Mexico Resolution' that the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) set up a regional SDG review mechanism (UN-ECLAC 2016b), followed by regional SDG forums in 2017 and 2018 hosted by the Mexican government (AMEXCID 2018k; UN-ECLAC 2018a). Through the technical lead on ECLAC processes, particularly at its Committee on South-South Cooperation, as well as the brokering of resolutions and hosting of events, representatives from different Latin American countries agreed during interviews that the Mexican government had played a central and proactive role in connecting global debates with regional SDG support schemes (Int-G-9; Int-G-16; Int-G-23).

*Mexico as multilateral connector*

One of the ways in which the Mexican government has combined different facilitating functions to champion multilateral development processes has been the setting up, leading or joining of so-called 'Groups of Friends'. A 'Friend', in UN jargon, refers to a country that is willing to informally promote a cause by being put on a list of supporters and sending representatives to meetings and events. It is expected that during more formal processes related to the cause at hand, 'Friends' will then provide proactive support (see Whitfield 2010). While Mexico has been a Friend of many development-related issues (see QUNO 2016; UN 2019d), a particularly visible and long-term engagement has been Mexico's support for the Financing for Development (FfD) process. In the late 1990s, the G77 had floated the possibility of organizing a conference on how to mobilise financial resources for development-related processes. When Chile tracked back from its initial offer to host, Mexico stepped in, investing more than six million US dollars in conference preparations (Cevallos 2002). A few years after officially leaving the G77, Mexican decision makers saw a major opportunity to show to the international community to what extent Mexico was actually ready and able, as Foreign Minister Tello (1994, 1) had argued in 1994, to "fight for increasingly deep and fruitful relations of cooperation between all groups of countries."

The first FfD conference took place in the city of Monterrey in 2002 against the backdrop of continuing tensions between the G77 and DAC members over the responsibilities for and modalities of providing development funding. The outcome document of the conference – the Monterrey Consensus – set out the contours of "a partnership that rewards good governance,

solid economic policies and legal structures with increased aid and trade initiatives" (Foreign Policy Association 2002, n.p.). While the objectives of the Monterrey Consensus arguably remained rather vague (Global Policy Forum 2008), they were still celebrated as an important step towards a common ground between all stakeholders (see Annan 2002). When addressing conference participants, Mexican President Vicente Fox (2000-2006) underlined that "regardless of economic asymmetries, developed and developing nations can tackle these differences and build productive and mutually beneficial partnerships" and made clear that his government as host was "determined that Monterrey will, like Bretton Woods and Camp David, become [the] short-hand for a significant turning point" (Fox 2002, para 3) in multilateral affairs.

Since 2002, Mexican representatives have made sure to establish the Monterrey Consensus – or the 'spirit of Monterrey' (Foreign Policy Association 2002) – as a reference point for all further discussion on development financing. Following its active engagement with FfD conferences in Doha in 2008 and Addis Ababa in 2015 (Cortés 2016), the Mexican government has been hosting the annual retreat of the Friends of Monterrey since 2016 to coordinate exchange and joint action on the follow-up to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (L. Wagner 2017; Bárcena 2017; UN 2018a; SRE 2019). Multilateral organisations and a range of countries from across the North/South divide have been supportive of Mexico's endeavours and agree that Mexico has been a "pillar" (Int-IO-20), "voice" (Int-N-47) or "synonym" (Int-G-14) for informal FfD exchanges. The head of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, Liu Zhenmin, stated in 2018 that he was

> so grateful for the initiative of the Group of Friends of Monterrey. [The Group's] contribution – and last year's retreat – was key to making the ECOSOC Forum on financing for development follow-up a success (cited in UN 2018a, para 3).

From a multilateral perspective, Mexico's role as FfD 'Friend' and champion has thus been a considerable achievement. According to a Mexican civil society activist who has followed FfD discussions closely, the Mexican government

> has played with the 'being-part-of-it-but-not-really-being-part-of-it' position quite well. They have found a pretty sexy position for themselves [between 'North' and 'South']; everybody turns to them, and they don't need to first negotiate with a bloc to be able to voice their stance (Int-N-13).

There is yet another setting where Mexico's readiness to play an active connecting role across North/South fault lines has come to the fore – the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). Initially hailed as a potential road towards the future of the field of international development, the GPEDC brought together UNDP and the OECD to coordinate a platform that would expand the narrow focus of the OECD's aid effectiveness agenda and bring in recipient countries, 'Southern' providers and non-governmental stakeholders on an equal footing (see Eyben and Savage 2013; Mawdsley et al. 2014). After the nominal setup of the GPEDC in 2011, Mexico was approached by the OECD to host the first GPEDC high-level event, connected to hopes that Mexico would help the initiative to "go beyond the divisions of North and South and so bring a wide range of partners together" (Constantine and Shankland 2017, 110). As host, Mexico was pulling strings and pushing negotiations in order to make sure that the GPEDC got visibility and political backing (Constantine and Shankland 2017; Villanueva and Lopez 2017), and in a rather rare move, supported the OECD-UNDP Joint Support Team with a one-off contribution of 40,000 US dollars (Int-O-20; Int-M-9). During preparations for the 2016 GPEDC meeting in Nairobi, AMEXCID also provided direct financial support, this time 50,000 US dollars for the Kenyan government to support logistical matters – and while some DAC donors also provided funding, Mexico's was "a lot quicker and more efficient with a lot less hassle in terms of administrative procedures" (Int-M-20).

One unique feature of the GPEDC has been its multi-stakeholder governance structure. Unlike standard multilateral development arrangements, the GPEDC steering committee includes representatives from a range of non-governmental constituencies; and the GPEDC Co-Chair system has been set up as a three-legged arrangement supposed to include "[g]overnments representing the full spectrum of development co-operation" (GPEDC 2016a, 3) with one traditional donor, one recipient country and one representing "dual-character countries" (GPEDC 2017b, 28; see GPEDC 2016b, 27). Mexico took over the 'dual' Co-Chair position in 2014, and AMEXCID has since dedicated considerable efforts to promoting the GPEDC across multilateral fora. The intensification of engagement with the GPEDC has coincided with the expansion of duality-related references in official Mexican accounts discussed above; and during interviews with AMEXCID officials as well as representatives of bilateral and multilateral bodies in Mexico, Paris and New York, the GPEDC was repeatedly mentioned as a prime example of Mexican engagement. As one senior OECD official put it, "Mexico has shown

strong leadership with the GPEDC; I think if there is one country with the capacity to bridge differences in perception, it is Mexico" (Int-IO-19). While the GPEDC has faced serious challenges (Bracho 2015; Constantine and Shankland 2017; Taggart forthcoming), and while Mexico's engagement with it has not been perceived as entirely positive (see below), it has provided AMEXCID with a space to combine the facilitating, hosting and championing roles it has been eager to play in multilateral development diplomacy. For UNDP and the OECD, Mexico's 'added value' lies in the specific ways in which its proximity to G77 countries, particularly in Latin America, and its understanding of DAC country positions are combined with "an unparalleled readiness to engage" (Int-IO-35).

*Turkey as multilateral connector*

Similar to the first steps of Mexico's support for FfD processes, it was in the first decade of the 2000s when Turkey began to increase its engagement with the cause of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in multilateral circles. Adopted during the fourth UN conference on LDCs – a once-in-a-decade event – that took place in Istanbul in 2011, the Istanbul Programme of Action set out the agenda for LDC support by putting "a strong focus on developing [the] productive capacities [of LDCs]" (UN-OHRLLS 2011, para 1). Turkey has since been actively engaged as the Co-Chair of the Group of Friends for LDCs (Sinirlioğlu 2019) and, as discussed above (*see Chapter 3*), has invested in LDC support in a variety of ways, namely through the substantial increase in bilateral development programmes (TIKA 2016b; TIKA 2018a), the organisation of the 2016 mid-term review of the Istanbul Programme in Antalya (UN-OHRLLS 2016) and the hosting of the newly established UN Technology Bank for LDCs (UN 2018b). While the motivations for Turkish engagement with LDCs have arguably ranged from a general interest in expanding ties with potential export markets to questions of international status (see Sucuoğlu and Stearns 2016), the Turkish government has made the case that

> [a]s a middle income country, Turkey is in a better position to understand the requirements and concerns of the LDCs and is committed to do her best to be the voice of these countries at … international fora (TC-DB n.d.c).

The simultaneous closeness to developing-country realities on the one hand and international donor circles on the other provided a convincing rationale for Turkish engagement with LDCs (see Donelli and Levaggi 2016). While no country outside Western Europe had ever hosted a

major LDC conference, UN officials have referred to Turkey as the "obvious choice" (Int-IO-30), highlighting that the Turkish government

> knows what it means to struggle with domestic development, they now have their own aid programme, they are right in the middle of it; … this is the kind of ambassador LDCs need (Int-IO-30; see Korkut and Civelekoğlu 2013, 194).

The decision to award Turkey the hosting of the first World Humanitarian Summit followed the Istanbul LDC conference and was based on a similar rationale. In 2011 informal discussions had begun about the possibility of organizing a global summit to bring together all relevant players engaged in crisis response to rethink the ways in which humanitarian assistance was done (Int-IO-2; Int-IO-7). While there were other countries interested in hosting the summit, an official working for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) who closely accompanied summit preparations recalled that

> Turkey was just too strong a candidate. At the crossroad of migration flows, country of origin, host of refugees, with institutional capacity and a lot of political will …. And they didn't disappoint us. They were really committed (Int-IO-11).

As several interview partners highlighted, Turkey did "a lot of lobbying" (Int-IO-2) for the Summit, using its embassies and networks abroad to make people attend and funding the participation of LDC representatives as well as youth and local community delegates (Int-IO-11; Int-T-18). Based on a wide range of consultations (UN-OCHA 2019c), the Summit attracted 9000 people, including 55 heads of state and government, and put forward the Agenda for Humanity as an overarching framework to "reduce the unprecedented level of humanitarian need and suffering" (UN-GA 2016, 1). Both Summit and Agenda have become a key reference for the UN's work on the humanitarian-development nexus, promoted as a 'new way of working' that foresees a closer coordination between (short-term) humanitarian assistance and (long-term) development support where all players work towards jointly agreed multi-year outcomes (UN-OCHA 2019a). In line with the Turkish government's efforts to promote its 'humanitarian diplomacy (Davutoğlu 2013b; TC-DB 2014; Çavuşoğlu 2016; Özkan 2013; Süsler 2019), Turkey was hailed for its "substantive contributions" (UN-GA 2016, 1) to the Summit. According to interview accounts, for both OCHA and the Turkish government the close collaboration seemed to have paid off.

Yet another area where Turkish engagement has built on notions of simultaneous belonging to 'North' and 'South' has been Turkey's collaboration with and support for UNDP. While UNDP and the Turkish government had been collaborating since the 1960s (UNDP-Turkey

2019), it was under the leadership of then-Foreign Minister Davutoğlu that negotiations began in the late 2000s about expanding joint cooperation beyond Turkish borders. In 2011, Turkey and UNDP signed a partnership agreement providing a framework for increasing joint engagement at regional and global levels. This built on an earlier decision to establish a UNDP centre of excellence in Turkey that would build on the experience of the Turkish private sector – particularly its small and medium enterprises – in contributing to broader socio-economic development processes. As mentioned above, the Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development opened its doors in 2011 (UNDP 2011a; UNDP 2011b). For UNDP, a crucial aspect of the partnership agreement with Turkey was, from the very beginning, money (Int-IO-14; Int-IO-31; see UNDP 2013b). Faced with dwindling contributions from some of its traditional donors in the wake of the 2008-2009 financial crisis, the organization was eager to expand its donor base and made an explicit attempt to get the so-called 'emerging economies' on board (Int-IO-14; Int-IO-29; Int-IO-31; see UNDP2013c). The Turkish government has not only supported the Istanbul Centre financially and through in-kind contributions but has also committed to providing three million US dollars annually to UNDP's core budget (UNDP 2017, 2), dedicating this money to programmes in UNDP's Europe and Central Asia region (Int-IO-3; Int-IO-4; see UNDP 2014; UNDP 2015; UNDP 2017). As part of its growing engagement with Turkey, UNDP has relocated its regional office from Bratislava as well as its global private sector division from New York to Istanbul (Terece 2015; UNDP n.d.; see Russell Lee 2012; Vilikovská 2013). Together, UNDP and the Turkish government have argued that this expanding collaboration builds on their decades-long cooperation on domestic development processes in Turkey and, at the same time,

> reflects Turkey's increasing role in global development, its geopolitical importance, and its role as a significant provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) as OECD's fastest growing donor (UNOSSC 2017, n.p.).

Again, it is Turkey's particular combination of a programme country developing trajectory and its expanding track record as an increasingly visible provider that has made it, in the words of a UNDP official in charge of partnership affairs, "one of our most successful emerging partners" (Int-IO-14).

# 3. (Anti)Models

Notions of combination and connection usually come with positive connotations. Both/And is often seen as being "more inclusive", as Nami Thompson (2018, para 10f) writes, and as offering a more "expansive" approach when it comes to facing unpleasant and divisive Either/Or scenarios. Both/And suggests that one does not need to choose as there are ways of having both (D. King 2018; see Coral Yachting 2019). Bridging, brokering or facilitating are notions that can build on or flow from the idea of simultaneous belonging. The combination of otherwise disparate poles provides the potential of showcasing and promoting connections between them; and the simultaneity and inclusivity of Both/And can have a shiny appearance that often exercises attraction. As insinuated in some of the interview accounts cited in previous sections, Mexico and Turkey's attempts to combine or connect 'North' and 'South' are often perceived positively by various audiences. Against this backdrop, to what extent are Mexico and Turkey seen as "models" (Constantine and Shankland 2017, 107) for combining or connecting 'North' and 'South', and for navigating the field of international development more generally?

## The best of both worlds

For Mexico, multilateral fora in particular have provided a space to shine; and Mexican diplomats are generally well-versed in presenting the advantages of Mexico's ambiguous positionalities along the lines of Both/And. As the former Mexican G20 Sherpa has argued, it is based on its multiple belongings and connections – to North and South America, the Pacific and the Atlantic as well as the historical links to Europe – that Mexico has

> the capacity to bring the positions of developed countries (OECD members) and developing countries … closer together … and the characteristics to be a natural facilitator in international negotiations (Aranda 2011, 27; see Alejo 2019; Tripp and Vega 2011).

During interviews, representatives from international organisations and 'Northern' bilaterals were particularly explicit in their positive appraisal for Mexico's engagement. While some had their reservations regarding Mexico's stance on specific issues, diplomats across the board agreed that Mexico had become a key player in multilateral development negotiations. As an Asian diplomat put it:

> They are deeply involved in GRULAC [the UN regional group for Latin America and the Caribbean], they know how to talk to the G77, they are close allies of the Europeans and they have this special and complex relationship with the US – they are really in the midst of it (Int-G-48).

Mexico's broad-based engagement in general – "Mexican diplomats are literally everywhere" (Int-G-20) – and their role in Agenda 2030 and the Financing for Development agenda in particular were cited as crucial for bringing negotiations forward, and for making Mexico an example to follow (Int-G-1; Int-G-22; Int-G-47). In the words of a European diplomat:

> Sometimes I wish we were a bit more like Mexico [because of] the way they engage with everyone, their energy, they know what they are doing, have real expertise, really good people, real multilateralists, this is the kind of people we need now (Int-G-14).

Representatives of the 'North' particularly appreciate Mexico's capacity and willingness to engage as well as Mexico's links to various parts of the different country factions and groupings (Int-G-5; Int-G-26; Int-G-32). Mexico's strength is seen in its well-trained and committed diplomats, its position close to both 'developed' and 'developing' countries, and its readiness to take on an active role in multilateral processes on development including those other countries do not bother about or actively turn their back on (Int-G-11; Int-G-13; Int-G-48). Interviews at the UN thus seem to corroborate the claim put forward by Mexican officials that Mexico's strength lies in its strong links to all sides combined with a "wide ranging participation in basically all fora dedicated to development and financing matters" (Tripp and Vega 2011, 29).

While the various audiences of international development politics I interviewed identified Mexico's exemplary character as lying in its multilateral facilitator role, their take on Turkey's strengths somewhat differed. While they mentioned Turkey as popular host, and while representatives from OCHA, UNDP and the office of the UN high-representative in charge of LDCs highlighted Turkey's contributions to their respective organisations and mandate-related processes, Turkey's engagement on the ground – usually far away from multilateral meeting venues – received special attention. In particular, representative from countries that have received Turkish development assistance, such as Afghanistan and Palestine, highlighted Turkey's "model country qualities" (Keyman 2016, 2280), notably its quick and unbureaucratic approach and the readiness to 'help where help is needed' (Int-G-6; Int-G11). This resonates with references to the 'Turkey model' or 'Turkish-Style Development Model' that has repeatedly been cited as responding particularly well to recipient demands through a

combination of humanitarian assistance with infrastructure development and private sector engagement (see TIKA 2019c, 11; Hausmann 2014; Dahir 2019).

Like traditional donors, Turkish institutions provide financial resources, set out to strengthen capacity and share know-how in a reliable and professional way – but they do so in what is presented as a somewhat more 'Southern' way. Interviews and publicly available sources suggest that TIKA's support is perceived as quick and little bureaucratic, with recipients valuing the absence of pre-set strategies and Turkish closeness to (Muslim) developing country realities. As an African diplomat put it in an interview: "They are donors, but they are a bit like us; they build hospitals and roads, they understand what we need, and how we need it" (Int-G-25). Turkish support for Somalia, in particular, has been an often-cited reference for Turkey's exemplary engagement (see Haşimi 2014; Achilles et al. 2015; Shinn 2015; Sucuoğlu and Stearns 2016; Sanzak and Woods 2017). According to a Somali journalist, "Turkey is among the very few international actors who believed in Somalia's success and have subsequently invested in Somalia's development" (Dahir 2019, n.p.). The Turkish government has built on this largely positive press to highlight Turkey's qualities as a development cooperation model (Int-T-12; Int-T-38: see Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010). In the words of President Erdoğan (2016c, n.p.):

> Somalia has become a symbol of how we view Africa and of the brotherly relations we wish to establish with Africa. With Somalia, [the] Turkish model of aid has gained recognition in [the] literature. We, in cooperation with [the] international community and countries in the region, will continue to work until Somalia becomes a country of peace and stability.

At the 6th High-Level Partnership Forum on Somalia in 2016, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (2016, n.p.) stated in response:

> [Turkish] aid is crucial due to the manner it has been used. This aid has been utilized to make the life of an ordinary Somalian better. Turkey has always provided the practical and useful aid we expect from our international partners.

The UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson (2016, n.p.), in turn, was quoted as referring to the Turkish government's engagement with and support for Somalia as "groundbreaking and exemplary."

In many ways, Mexico and Turkey are thus presented and perceived as a compelling combination of 'North' and 'South': their increase in economic and political weight, including their 'Northwards' moves (*see Chapter 3*), has been accompanied by a considerable surge in institutional capacity and readiness to engage abroad. Like other 'rising powers' – but without

the 'global threat' element that has accompanied China's reception among DAC donors and parts of the 'South' – Mexico and Turkey are seen as increasingly relevant players in international development politics; and representatives from both countries – bureaucrats, diplomats, politicians – are generally seen as talented, engaged and reliable partners (Int-G-26; Int-G-32; Int-IO-12; Int-IO-25). At the same time, their developing country trajectories and their (sometimes tentative) belonging to 'Southern' spaces, including more explicit attempts to move 'southwards' (*see Chapter 3*), have provided them with a level of proximity to recipients or developing countries that increases their credibility as development actors, both in multilateral spaces and in the context of development cooperation initiatives.

Several Mexican Foreign Ministers have highlighted Mexico's multiple belongings as a major asset (Castañeda 2002; Meade 2013); and Ahmet Davutoğlu has often been cited with his statement that Turkey has "a particular credibility in addressing inequality and extreme poverty [abroad] due to its cultural, historical and political background" between 'developed' Europe and 'developing' Asia (Hausmann 2014, 10f; see Davutoğlu 2012, 8). AMEXCID's commitment to duality rhetoric is, to a certain extent, mirrored by TIKA 's more recent tendency of highlighting the simultaneity of Turkey being a long-term OECD member and, at the same time, also having a track record with 'South-South' cooperation (TIKA 2018). Interviews with a range of stakeholders across the board indicate that these positions and roles are not just self-assigned. Representatives from other governments and multilateral bodies express their appreciation of the capacity of Mexico – not only individual Mexican representatives but also institutions like AMEXCID as a whole – to bring different sides together by providing a framework for gatherings, facilitating exchanges and brokering agreements. In a similar vein, a wide range of observers and recipient country representatives are indeed full of praise for what they perceive as Turkey's hands-on and unbureaucratic approach to providing support. In many ways, Mexico and Turkey are thus said to combine the best of both grand imaginaries, 'Southern' credibility and 'Northern' capacity.

## The worst of both worlds

While Mexico and Turkey have received praise for their combining and connecting functions, there is also another, maybe less presentable dimension to engagement attempts that reflect the logic of Both/And. Examples to follow once enjoyed popularity in international

development circles but have increasingly come under scrutiny. Many seem to have concluded that the one model for making the world a better place does not exist (see Baird et al. 2016; Sachs 2018; Breslin 2011). Evidence across the board suggests that it is futile to look for that one approach "we can simply unfurl … on the entire developing world [sic] like a picnic blanket" (Hobbes 2014, n.p.). Models – a particular intervention or a general cooperation approach – are thus likely to disappoint. Some of the issues identified as fundamentally problematic in the field of international development – such as missing accountability or the lack of impact of interventions (Lancaster 2007; Link 2007; Sridhar 2010; Hobbes 2014; Riddell 2014; Eyben et al. 2015; Kenny 2017; Malik 2018; Trajber-Waisbich forthcoming) as well as the inherent power hierarchies they reproduce or exacerbate – occur and persist on both sides of the North/South divide (see Kim and Lim 2017; Rudyak 2019).

Mexico and Turkey are no exception. External observers have raised doubts, for instance, about the relevance of Mexico's development cooperation initiatives that often consist of one-off exchanges, workshops or study tours (Int-N-5; Int-N-6; Int-G-30); and the Mexican government has faced Central American criticism and frustration about the fact that Mexico's weight in the region has not been translated into any major support structures for its struggling neighbours (Int-G-9; Int-G-15; see Chinchilla 2017).[50] The Turkish government, in turn, has repeatedly been confronted with allegations that its development cooperation is a key tool for geopolitical and geo-economic power politics (Int-G-5; Int-G-41; Int-IO-21; see Philips 2015); and questions about a lack of oversight for development cooperation projects and dubious procurement procedures have led to public discussions in Turkey about TIKA's legitimacy (CNN Türk 2018; İstanbul Gerçeği 2018; see BBC 2018; *see Annex 6.2*). While the triangular cooperation arrangements Mexico and Turkey are involved in seem to be perceived as largely positive by representatives from all parties involved (Int-IO-41; Int-G-29; Int-G-21; see OECD 2016c), the actual impact of engagement is often unclear as detailed evaluation data is missing. What is more, underlying motivations are not necessarily in line with external expectations. For AMEXCID, for instance, trilateral cooperation is often useful for one very specific reason: in times of shrinking budgets it brings in financial resources (Int-M-14; Int-M-22). As an AMEXCID senior official put it:

[50] In May 2019, the current President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (since 2018) announced that Mexico would increase its support for Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador; see Monroy 2019; EUM-PR 2019.

> There is so much we could do, there are so many project ideas and outlines, but we don't have the money. But if the Germans or the Japanese are interested, they put in money, and off we go (Int-M-19).

While this motivation is widely acknowledged as legitimate (Int-G-27; Int-G-30; Int-N-4), other motives are seen as more problematic. For instance, large parts of UN audiences I talked to were quick at questioning the Turkish government's performance and its underlying motivations for getting involved in development-related multilateral processes. Respondents across the board voiced the impression that Turkey was using development fora more than other countries to advance national interests (Int-G-26; Int-IO-30; Int-N-52). An often-cited case in point was Turkey's engagement with the post-2015 process that led to the setup of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. According to UN officials and member state diplomats, Kadir Topaş, Istanbul's former mayor (2004-2017) who was part of the Secretary-General's 2013 high-level panel convened to define the contours of the global development agenda, did not contribute much on development-related questions for the panel's final report (Int-N-47; Int-IO-8). Also, according to observers, the troika that Turkey formed with Italy and Spain during the negotiation of the SDGs was not particularly effective (Int-G-2; Int-G-19). What is more, a range of UN officials explicitly linked Turkey's development-related engagement to Turkish interests in other contexts, such as the UN Security Council (*see Chapter 5*), and highlighted that Turkish commitment was often characterised by "substantial amounts of empty talk" (Int-IO-8; Int-IO-10; Int-IO-20). As one UN official put it, "there is a lot of rhetoric involved when Turks talk about development processes; apart from their LDC work I haven't seen much of them [in multilateral venues]" (Int-IO-22).

In a similar vein, representatives of bilateral development agencies have embedded their experience with the Friends of Monterrey meetings in Mexico into a more general critique of the Mexican way of engaging with international development politics. As one of them stated in an interview, recalling the first FfD retreat in 2016:

> We sat around a massive table. A swimming pool. Nobody was able to talk to anybody else. There were no serious substantial discussions. … It was a lot of the usual blahblah – apart from the meet and greet no added value. … As happens so often with events organised by AMEXCID there is a lot of talk and very little action (Int-G-27; *see Annex 5.4*).

By the same token, Mexican civil society representatives have perceived AMEXCID's focus on processes like FfD (on development finance) or the GPEDC (on development effectiveness) as an unnecessary waste of time and energy. The following quote from an interview with the

member of a Mexican NGO reflects one of the core messages of most interviews with Mexican stakeholders outside the Foreign Ministry:

> Again there is a lot of nice talk, many frameworks, on paper everything looks nice; but sometimes … Mexican diplomats wander around in a separate reality. As long as there is something they can present in New York, they are happy. Whether anything actually changes in Mexico doesn't really matter for them (Int-N-12).

This alleged focus on the performances of international development politics *per se* is also taken up by a Latin American diplomat in New York who described her Mexican counterparts as "a bit like class reps, always in the first row, always raising their hand; and sometimes I don't think they have much to say" (Int-G-16). This uber-active behaviour can be perceived as annoying or problematic, both by diplomats from other UN member states who hold that Mexicans "sometimes behave like stage hogs, they just need to calm down a bit" (Int-G-13) as well as representatives from Mexican academia and civil society who argue that this over-commitment to often rather superficial multilateral processes comes at the expense of seriously needed engagement with development-related questions on the ground, at home and abroad (Int-N-2; Int-N-9). These impressions from outside the Foreign Ministry are actually not that dissimilar from the feelings some AMEXCID officials express behind closed doors. The following quote from the account of a Mexican official reflects a more general trend among those who voiced substantial criticism during interviews:

> We want to be everywhere, all the time. There is so much going on, we invest so much time in meetings and conferences and retreats – but I don't really see where all this is going to. Sometimes I feel like we, as an institution, can't say no; we need that constant validation that others like us, that they are impressed by the way we set up table tents, or whatever it is we do when others visit us (Int-M-39).

The disappointment with entities hailed as models also affects those that self-identify or are hailed as bridges: the Mexican *claim* of being a connector is not necessarily related to actually exercising a connecting function. Beyond the shallowness of engagement where "we try to be everybody's darling" (Int-M-38) and the challenges this creates for a coherent approach, it is the lack of concrete results that many identify as problematic. AMEXCID's commitment to the GPEDC in particular is seen as a nuisance. "We should have let it go straight away", one AMEXCID official (Int-M-25) argued in a conversation, "we should not have taken on the co-presidency [in 2014], or at least let go after that [in 2016], but no, we had to continue investing energy in another useless initiative." A diplomat now working in another department of the Foreign Ministry highlights the opportunity costs of 'championing' one specific initiative:

> The GPEDC cost us a lot, there are many other things AMEXCID wasn't able to do. In times of scarce resources we have to choose wisely. It was pretty obvious early on that China and India wouldn't join [the GPEDC], that is was dead capital, politically. But they [AMEXCID] continued anyway (Int-M-51).

Interviews with Mexican officials, representatives from Mexican civil society and academia as well as external observers point to critical questions about Mexico's engagement patterns. Apart from a sympathetic endorsement by UN officials and "a pat on the back from fellow diplomats who are happy about having spent another couple of days in Mexico" (Int-N-6), what do informal multilaterals retreats actually lead to? Would the time, energy and material resources invested in these events not be of better use for, say, designing and implementing one or two longer-term cooperation projects with Central American partners? More generally, do attempts of championing a cause or facilitating agreement in multilateral processes warrant the investment of overall limited resources? Both external observers and Mexican officials themselves point to the questionable motivations behind the attempt of 'being everywhere with everyone'. The evocation of the 'class rep' or 'stage hog' syndromes paint the image of a collective entity seeking constant validation, without necessarily knowing what kind of contribution they are making, and whether this contribution is relevant. If facilitating or brokering attempts do not lead to any meaningful result, and if on top of that they are seen as part of somewhat desperate attempts to claim relevance, Both/And connecting attempts forfeit persuasiveness. More fundamentally, the very foundation of these claims – simultaneous belonging – has a challenging side to it. When going through my notes while rethinking the notion of Both/And, it was this statement by a seasoned Mexican diplomat that jumped at me as a poignant summary of what many others had told me about representing Mexico in development-related fora:

> It is true, we try to be everywhere, with everyone; we sit at the OECD as a developed country; we are a Latin American country; we want to be a trusted partner for Central America and the Caribbean; we are part of NAFTA and in so many ways closely related to the US, for better or for worse. It's all a bit schizophrenic. And here I sit at my desk and try to be everything at the same time, or in turns (Int-M-37).

What is often referred to as schizophrenic – split or multiple personalities (APA 2019, n.p.) and the switching between different identities – currently goes under 'dissociative identity disorder' where the simultaneity of different senses of self, as Emma Young (2017, n.p.) argues, has features of "the ultimate adaption system", particularly in contexts where "lots of things … are in flux." Depending on the setting, the dissociation of different identities in one

entity allows for specific elements to come to the fore (and others to remain hidden) in order to better manage challenging situations. While 'collective schizophrenia' in international politics, as Anna Agathangelou and Lily Ling (2004, 39) have argued, is a widespread condition that "afflicts states in the 'North' as much as those in the 'South'", insights from Mexico suggest that it might particularly affect those trying to make the case for being both here and there. Feelings of confusion accompany and affect attempts of practicing simultaneous belonging through bridging. While connecting attempts can be judged as success or failures – or might go unnoticed – they can contribute to unease and disorientation, and to excessive demands on individuals to play a range of seemingly incompatible roles 'at the same time, or in turns.' As Noel González (2016, 5), part of the AMEXCID senior management, has put it:

> [C]ountries with a dual role in development co-operation face a particular challenge: our institutional machinery should be able to serve both roles with quality, coherence and consistency.

While this challenging side may often get overlooked, for those at the forefront of Mexican attempts of bridging in all directions – of being 'everywhere with everyone' – potential overstretch is an integral part of Both/And realities.

## 4. Both/And as Thirding

Against the backdrop of sticky binaries such as North/South, claims to simultaneity – i.e. the concurrence of elements of both binary categories – refuse to accept the mutual exclusivity of poles by making a case for the combination of otherwise disparate components. Strategies and practices that reflect the notion of simultaneous (or dual) belonging and include the combination of elements from different poles are thus Thirding attempts. Like cyborgs or *muxes* in other social fields, categories like 'pivotal country' in development cooperation schemes or the third grouping of countries that are 'recipients and providers' forming a three-legged executive governance system at the GPEDC are "what confuses meaning, the norm, normality" (Barthes 1976, 107) in the traditional setup of international development. They reflect attempts of responding to the apparent need, in the words of a seasoned Mexican

diplomat, to "make a box that fits us" (Int-M-49). While Mexico and Turkey have arguably been particularly visible examples that fit the 'pivotal' or 'dual' country categories, the triad of "providers, recipients, and dual countries" (Alonso 2018, 8f) has by now become an increasingly familiar reference in multilateral circles. The growing visibility of countries that have insisted in the simultaneity of providing and receiving, and thus in the combination of elements traditionally associated with either 'North' or 'South', has created a new set of increasingly established positionalities (*see Chapter 6*). In a textbook example of Lefevbrian Thirding (see Soja 1996, 69f), so to say, triangular schemes reflect a three-legged logic (donors/recipients/pivotals) and the GPEDC has institutionalized a triadic governance structure (donors/recipients/dual countries) that expand and unsettle North/South binaries.

Attempts to establish combined forms as separate categories can, of course, be more or less successful. At the GPEDC, for instance, Mexico was unable to find another "properly dual" (Int-IO-23) player ready to take over when its mandate as a 'dual country' Co-Chair ran out in 2016. Turkey and many others were not interested; as a Turkish diplomat put it succinctly, "there's no point in investing in a sinking ship" (Int-T-11). In the end Bangladesh – an LDC and by no means part of the group of increasingly vocal middle-income countries that visibly act as development cooperation providers (Risse 2018) – took over the dual chair position but has played a rather low-profile role (Int-M-50; Int-IO-52). The dual country 'third box', however, has remained and, on the GPEDC Steering Committee, is currently represented by Colombia and the Philippines (GPEDC 2019a). Beyond the success or failure of establishing and embracing "the third term of a trinary relation" (Germon 2008, 256), the general commitment to combining elements from both poles can provide a – maybe surprisingly – stable reference framework for dual identities.

This Both/And continuity is particularly visible in terms of the identity narratives official Mexican accounts have put forward. At first sight, Mexico's narrative approach is what, following Felix Berenskoetter (2014, 273), could be referred to as rather "conservative:" over the decades, the plot on the simultaneity of providing and receiving has managed to establish a stable connection between past and present experiences and has thus proven to be a rather "robust" narrative guidance. The creative element of official Mexican identity narratives, maybe surprisingly, lies in this robustness: time and again, the plot of Mexico as a dual entity has left "enough room to keep the promise of becoming something [it] is not already" (Berenskoetter 2014, 273) and has thus shown to be of remarkable flexibility. Narratively, the

Both/And logic has allowed for adapting the stories official accounts tell about Mexico's roles and positions without touching the underlying plot. Mexico's engagement with the field of international development can change quite drastically – as it has done in the past – without the main story line needing substantial revision. As member of both the G77 and the DAC, or as member of either of them, Mexico would still be able to rely on its dual identity as recipient and provider. In terms of the larger narrative, the place Mexico speaks from remains both here and there. Shifts are, if at all, only gradual, and can go in all directions – as with the *de facto* move from 'donor' to 'provider' terminology over the last years (*see Chapter 3*).

The notion of facilitating bridge fits neatly with this narrative Both/And approach; but, hypothetically, many other roles – including that of leader, spoiler or outcast – could be applied, again without touching the underlying plot. This flexibility has made Mexico's application of the Both/And logic the stable narrative foundation for integrating all sorts of events. Following Cynthia Weber (2014, 596), it is this strong emphasis on being "one thing *and* another" that makes Mexico's identity narrative in international development quintessentially queer. In terms of its underlying logic, Mexico's narrative approach is reminiscent of phenomena related to intersex or the 'third gender': like individuals that can be seen as combining both male and female characteristics, Mexico is portrayed as a non-binary entity that combines features of both recipients and donors, of both 'North' and 'South'. The non-binary character of Both/And has provided the foundation for keeping the same fundamental plot for decades while allowing the story about who or what Mexico is to be guided into "further disclosing the world [and] making something new" (Berenskoetter 2014, 273). In terms of intra-narrative coherence in official accounts over time, the Mexican focus on non-binary duality has been a stable and flexible – and for the continuity of the collective sense of self in official accounts remarkably successful – narrative approach to international development.

The very existence of dual non-binaries like Mexico provides a challenge for the increasingly porous donor/recipient divide; it represents yet another dimension of

> a fascinating re-articulation of power that is reflective of, and producing, a complex geography of development actors and power relations that goes beyond the two traditional development axes of North–South and South–South (McEwan and Mawdsley 2012, 1190).

The simultaneity and combination of elements from both poles undermines their mutual exclusivity and joins a wide range of other phenomena in exposing the field of international

development as a set of "historically contingent and power-laden social constructions" (Peterson 2014, 604). At the same time, and in line with other 'queer' phenomena, simultaneity as duality also "support[s] assumptions, orders, and institutions" (Weber 2014, 598) associated with the *status quo*. By accepting the difference between providing and receiving in the first place (instead of, say, putting forward the notion of co-creation) it draws on the traditional donor/recipient binary centring around the DAC as dominant reference point. Engagement that reflects the logic of Both/And can thus be both conservative and innovative and draws on notions that are at the core of queer positionalities without fundamentally challenging the underlying binaries that have structured the spaces of international development.

## Connecting as Thirding

Based on the simultaneity of a 'combined' positionality, attempts of closing or reducing gaps between opposing poles reflect another way of unsettling binaries – the Thirding of bridging and connecting. Against the backdrop of regular confrontations between 'North' and 'South,' both Mexican and Turkish governments have offered to bring different sides closer together. The particular sets of functions that Turkey and particularly Mexico have repeatedly taken over create certain "niches" for engagement (see Cooper 1997) that allow them to highlight the added value of their contributions. While engaging as facilitators, hosts or champions as well as strategic recipients or triangular 'hinges', they put forward claims to relevance based on the different elements they combine – somewhat similar to combination remedies that build on a particular amalgamation of ingredients (Jacobs et al. 2006) – to manoeuvre and manage gaps and tensions related, in one way or another, to a decades-long commitment to North/South binaries in rhetoric and practice. Engaging with the Thirding inherent in how Mexico and Turkey – as connectors or champions – try to "oscillate between binary positionings" (Anderson 2002, 309) contributes to a more critical understanding of and reflection on relations between both poles.

While the image of a bridge often comes with somewhat static connotations, bridges are not only passive entities but can indeed play a more fundamental role in the constitution of reality. In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, Martin Heidegger (1976 [1951], II-5) holds that a bridge

> does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other … It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighbourhood.

Heidegger puts an explicit focus on the constitutive and active nature of a bridge. Poles may be slightly transformed by a bridge that connects them; they are brought 'into each other's neighbourhood', in closer relation to each other. Understanding space as "that for which room has been made," bridges create space for phenomena to "gather" and interact (Heidegger 1976 [1951], II-6). When facilitators at the Second Committee manage to identify enough common ground for a proposition to receive unanimous support (such as Turkey's LDC resolution), their bridging function can contribute to a tendency of weakening the power of the North/South divide in multilateral fora. If a wide range of stakeholders from different sides follow the invitation of the Mexican government to gather under the banner of the Friends of Monterrey, informal retreats have the potential of advancing the debate on contentious issues and strengthening linkages that contribute to the success of formal negotiations; and these negotiations, in turn, can lead to a generally agreed framework for financing questions supposed to counter North/South frictions. With a substantial boost in terms of financial and in-kind contributions through the Turkish government, an entity like UNDP that faces internal and external criticism can reposition itself through visible instruments such as the Istanbul Centre and explore new ways of connecting threads in a region defined by its closeness to Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East.

The ways in which Mexico and Turkey connect traditional donors and recipient countries in triangular cooperation schemes, or how ODA is employed to tap into their potential future connecting functions, all reflect different ways of how bridging contributes – or is hoped or thought to contribute – to shaping the wider field and the dynamics that define it. This is how bridges come to "lead" (Heidegger 1976 [1951], II-5): they shape the ways in which passages or connections occur or are established, and thus impact the 'shores' their pillars stand on. This notion of the bridge as 'leading' resonates with a another meaning of the term itself: in shipping circles, the term 'bridge' also refers to the elevated platform from which operations are directed (Latarche 2016). In a more general sense, bridging thus carries the potential of playing a more active role in reshaping (or reproducing) the entities that are bridged or, more generally, the social space it is positioned in. This is how the connecting or bridging done by facilitators, hosts or champions contributes to Thirding as another way of approaching shared space (Soja 1996). While some have highlighted the inherent passivity of bridges (Davutoğlu

2013a; see Saral 2017, 190), they indeed have the potential to challenge and reshape the binary *status quo*.

## Both/And: the (dis)integrative unsettling of binaries

By and large, the logic of Both/And is associated with positive connotations. The dividing lines of Either/Or are replaced through the Both/And promise of connection that, in everyday parlance, also carries the connotation of feeling close to or having a good relationship with others on both sides of binary divides (see Thompson 2018). Irrespective of whether their engagement patterns are seen as examples to follow or something to be wary of, a focus on Mexico and Turkey provides evidence for what attempts of embracing the logic of Both/And can look like. Their (partially) successful claims to multiple belonging challenge what has been defined as normal – with normality referring to the idea of being clearly placed in one of two binary categories. For Mexico and Turkey, normality is defined in somewhat broader terms, and not in line with (even though still with reference to) North/South. What from an Either/Or perspective might appear as the cohabitation of contradictory positionalities, are actually identities composed of different aspects traditionally only associated with one of two mutually exclusive poles (Germon 2008; Bourseul 2014; ISNA 2019). While, from a traditional perspective, being an OECD member, reporting ODA or participating in DAC peer-reviews seems at odds with hosting 'Southern provider' meetings or doing 'South-South' cooperation, the Mexican and Turkish governments often have the possibility to "go either way" (Hemmings 2007, 14), depending on the constellation at hand. The incremental farewell from North/South binaries which Mexican and Turkish combination and connecting practices contribute to can offer space for exploring or experimenting with different positionalities and forms of collaboration in a more open-ended way.

Straddling attempts, however, also come with specific challenges. Those representing the poles that are 'being bridged' may find connecting efforts little convincing or object to their destabilising impact on established frameworks. Observers can challenge the underlying motivations of connectors that are not necessarily congruent with the spirit of combination and synthesis often portrayed as inherently positive. And those individuals and groups supposed to implement bridging functions can perceive it as exhausting or 'schizophrenic'. In a seminal paper on the Third World's positionality in the international system, Mohammed

Ayoob (1989, 68) argued for understanding schizophrenia not as a medical term but in a figurative sense, describing a dilemma in which one encounters "contradictory practical dispositions" for dealing with a given social context. Peter Vale (2009), in turn, has used the notion of schizophrenia to make sense of the discrepancies between 'Southern' realities and academic approaches tailored according to the 'Western-Northern' world – where the combination of wanting to fit in both here and there leads to contradictions and inconsistencies. The split rhetoric or 'double discourse' stemming from addressing different audiences from different vantage points can lead to perceptions of inconsistency or incoherence, such as the shift in tone and content depending on whether Mexican representatives talk to its northern or southern neighbours about questions of migration and development (Ruiz Sandoval 2009). Either/Or thus remains the (sometimes rather invisible) reference point for Both/And. Mexico's duality is defined with references to being both a 'provider' and a 'recipient'. In its collaboration with UNDP, Turkey is both 'programme country' and part of the 'donor base.' The binaries as such remain somewhat intact and still define the ways in which Both/And is imagined and practiced.

Why try to be both? Why agree to the inherent overstretch of Both/And and invest in attempts to play both roles at the same time? Work on how the Both/And logic affects individuals – (mostly) women – that combine the work of a traditional 'homemaker' and a professional career has shown that they are "trying to prove we can do it all and do it flawlessly … while … under pressure to accomplish more" (DeCosimo 2018, n.p.; see Bodewits et al. 2016). While parallels have of course to be taken with caution, the basic insight that attempts of implementing Both/And strategies can lead to overstretch is also relevant for organisations like AMEXCID. Beyond individual officials' impressions of schizophrenic collective behaviour, the time, energy and resources required to engage in processes and practices related to being both 'donor' and 'recipient' are considerable. As an institution, AMEXCID has to coordinate incoming assistance, report on the effectiveness of that assistance or manage relations with traditional donors while, at the same time, define priority areas with partner countries, design projects, programmes and monitoring strategies and report on outgoing assistance flows. (All this in addition to tasks related to Mexico's engagement with multilateral development processes or the coordination with domestic stakeholders.) Some Mexican respondents – mostly those outside the Foreign Ministry – argued that while there were good reasons for bringing together the management of incoming and outgoing flows, it was questionable

whether it was a good idea to put functions traditionally associated with a ministry of development in a recipient country or the cooperation agency of a traditional donor under the roof of one under-funded and under-staffed entity (Int-M-14; Int-M-39). While the scarcity of funding and personnel is a material condition that requires the availability of resources and a political decision to change, this point raises a more general question. If attempts of living the simultaneity of 'North' and 'South' lead to a burdening overstretch, would it instead be possible to leave the scripts connected to notions of 'donor' and 'recipient' as guiding references behind and explore other ways of engaging with international development politics? More generally, to what extent is a more substantial emancipation from binary structures possible, and what might such an emancipation look like? This is part of what I turn to in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5.

# Neither/Nor

The logic of Neither/Nor points back to the very beginning of my musings about Mexican and Turkish positionalities in international development politics (*see Chapter 1*). It was their patterns of organisational belonging that prompted the initial focus on Mexico and Turkey as the only member states of the G20 that fell out of the traditional frames of 'North (previously 'First' and 'Second' Worlds) and 'South' (formerly referred to as 'Third World'). More specifically, their positions outside both the G77 and the DAC seemed to epitomise the "neither here nor there" (Turner 1969, 95) in the inter-governmental spaces of international development. After exploring how Either/Or assignations and Both/And aspirations have played out with regard to positionalities, strategies and experiences, in this chapter I examine the Neither/Nor dimensions of Mexican and Turkish engagement. While I draw again on both case reservoirs, insights from Turkey in particular resonate strongly with Neither/Nor. I focus on how experiences of not fitting in are presented as exceptional circumstances to celebrate and project strength (section 1), or lead to feelings of exclusion, isolation and ontological limbo (section 2). Building on this simultaneity of celebrating Neither/Nor strength and experiencing Neither/Nor confusion, I examine some of the concrete ways in which Mexican and Turkish engagement exhibits signs of a 'different kind of normal' beyond the poles of 'North' and 'South' (section 3), and finally reflect on the Thirding elements of Neither/Nor dynamics that explicitly move beyond North/South binaries and centre around notions of emancipation (section 4).

# 1. Exceptional: superior to 'North' and 'South'

In a context where binaries enjoy easy recourse and widespread acceptance, positionalities defined in distance to *both* dominant poles tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Stemming from the Latin term *excipere*, exceptional means different from or 'taken out from' a given situation or norm (OED 2019). While the term does not carry an inherent judgement as to the value of that difference, it has also come to mean being "unusually good" or "much better than average" (Merriam Webster 2019h, n.p.) and is used to "describe someone or something that has a particular quality, usually a good quality, to an unusually high degree" (Collins 2019f, n.p.). References to exceptional*ism*, more specifically, have been employed to depict "an attitude to other countries … based on the idea of being quite distinct from, and often superior to, them in vital ways" (Collins 2019f, n.p.; see Ignatieff 2005; Hodgson 2009). It is in line with this understanding of 'exceptional' as being favourably different from the norm that references to 'emerging donors' began to take centre stage in debates about the changing landscape of international development in the early 2000s (*see Chapter 1*). China, Brazil and India in particular were hailed by some – and presented themselves – as the bigger and stronger brothers of the developing 'South' that, at the same time, were morally and in some ways also developmentally superior to the 'North' (see Prashad 2012; Gu et al. 2016; cf. Naím 2009). With this double superiority, so to say, the distance to the traditional poles of international development politics was interpreted as an inherently positive development, not only for the "rising stars" (O'Neill 2011, n.p.; Gryczka 2018) themselves but also for the field at large that was said to become more diverse and inclusive (see Gray and Gills 2016; Noesselt 2016).

Varieties of this double superiority have also been part of Mexico's and particularly Turkey's positionalities and experiences. For Mexico, its relationship with Central America and the Caribbean has stood at the centre of different sets of exceptionality claims. When asked about the concrete contours of Mexico's leadership in the region, interview respondents across the board mentioned *Proyecto Mesoamérica* [Project Mesoamerica] as the prime example. Set up in 2008, Proyecto Mesoamérica has been a "Mexican initiative" (PM 2019a, para 2) to promote regional cooperation in collaboration with governments, UN agencies and multilateral development banks across Central America, broadly defined (see Capdepont

Ballina 2010; PM 2019b; *see Annex 2.6*). While the other nine member states – seven Central American countries, Colombia and the Dominican Republic – share a rotating 'pro-tempore' position where each country spends six months at the helm of the organisation, the Mexican government has a permanent seat in the Proyecto's joint presidency (PM 2019g; *see Annex 5.3*). So far, Mexico has been the only member country involved in all Proyecto initiatives (see PM 2018) and is also the only member to have contributed substantial amounts of funding, including 54 million US dollars for social housing projects across Central America (PM 2019d), 29 million US dollars to modernise the border between El Salvador and Guatemala (PM 2019c) and 15 million US dollars for its regional flagship initiative on food security, *Mesoamérica Sin Hambre* [Mesoamerica Hunger Free] (FAO 2019b; PM 2019f).

The Proyecto's governance mechanism as well as its implementation practices and funding streams thus reflect Mexico's dominance in the sub-region's most prominent development cooperation mechanism. During interviews, Mexican diplomats repeatedly mentioned the Proyecto when highlighting that one of Mexico's main assets in global debates was its cultural, historical and geopolitical proximity to Central America and the Caribbean, calling for "Mexican leadership in the region" (Int-M-27). Representatives from bilateral DAC agencies also argued that Mexico was predestined to lead on cooperation with Central America (Int-G-29; Int-N-43). As a European official put it:

> Mexicans are so much closer to their [Central American] realities, they have a lot more street credibility [through Proyecto Mesoamérica]; this is why we try to establish links with AMEXCID (Int-G-44).

For both Mexican officials and DAC donor representatives, Proyecto Mesoamérica highlights not only Mexico's exceptional strength and capacity compared to its economically and institutionally weaker neighbours but also a level of proximity and (alleged) credibility that DAC donors are unable to attain.

In multilateral spheres of international development politics, in turn, it is Mexico's position outside established alliances of 'North' or 'South' – such as the DAC, the EU or the G77 – that has come with experiences of enjoying a considerable degree of freedom from often cumbersome coordination and alignment necessities. Several Mexican diplomats I interviewed mentioned the notion of Mexico as a Group-of-1 (G1) country to summarise Mexico's positionality. As one of them put it: "We often joke that we are a G1 … We are our own group; we are free to do whatever we want and are not bound by long and cumbersome

internal processes" (Int-M-4). Interview accounts of Mexican diplomats repeatedly mentioned how much time EU member state representatives had to spend on coordination efforts and, with particular verve, portrayed the G77 as an inflexible and fragile alliance (Int-M-3; Int-M-38). They described the G77 as still influential but divided body whose internal fault lines made it increasingly difficult to project a coherent image towards the outside world:

> I'm glad we don't have to attend their discussions …; it is really tiring, [there is] no coherence, you don't understand who's in charge. The G77 is a very diverse group; some countries feel they should be leaders, other countries get overwhelmed inside. A nightmare, really (Int-M-2).

Against the backdrop of what is described as the anachronistic composition and internal fragmentation of the G77, Mexican diplomats see themselves in a dynamic position. For them, Mexico's agility unfolds as an alternative to the constraints of coordination and alignment of large groupings in 'North' or 'South' more generally and the rigidity and confusion of the G77 in particular.

While notions of Neither/Nor superiority are reflected in certain parts of Mexico's (regional) engagement and accounts from interviews with Mexican officials, they are considerably more central to how Turkish accounts portray and embed Turkey's position in international development politics. Contrary to the first decade of AKP rule (post-2002) when official Turkish accounts promoted Turkey's linear rise towards becoming a DAC-like donor (*see Chapter 3*), more recent accounts take Turkey itself as the main reference point for comparison. TIKA's most comprehensive promotional video to date (TIKA 2018a, 00:01f) – translated into Arabic, English, French and Spanish – begins with the words:

> There is a country … right in [sic] the heart of the earth. A country that *is* the heart of the earth. There is a country of abundance ... that has welcomed thousands of colours, thousands of flowers, thousands of races, for a thousand years. [B]ig hearts, beating in unison, both gathering and giving away. A country that is both home and hope to the down-trodden. There is Turkey.

As 'the heart of the earth', Turkey – the 'country of abundance' – is assigned an exceptional place on the world map. The 'thousand years' of being 'both home and hope to the down-trodden' are arguably a reference to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire; and both Turkey's centrality and its connection to Ottoman legacies is taken up in other accounts through the trope of Turkey as (extending) *yardım eli* [a helping hand] (TIKA 2012, 5f), closely connected to historical notions of religiously inspired charity (TC-BDA 2016; TIKA 2012, 78). Highlighting the connection between Turkey's current engagement with humanitarian and development

assistance on the one hand, and the image of the Ottoman tradition of assisting those in need on the other, Turkey's past as a recipient is not mentioned in this new – and increasingly dominant – plotline (TC-BDA 2016). The eight decades following the demise of the Ottoman Empire (in 1922) and preceding the AKP's first electoral victory (in 2002) are either only briefly referred to via anecdotal examples of how Turkey provided one-off assistance abroad in emergency situations (see TC-BDA 2016) or not mentioned at all. Instead, more recent official accounts draw a direct connection between the AKP-led expansion of Turkish engagement with international development and what is presented as centuries of Ottoman support for people in need. In another segment of TIKA's 2018 promotional video, for instance, President Erdoğan and his wife shake the hands of dark-skinned children, while Erdoğan's voice explains from the off that "[e]very problem today in [the region] began with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire [and e]ach problem in this region can be resolved with Turkey's contribution" (TIKA 2018a, 01:30f). An implicit message of recent accounts seems to be that Turkey was never 'just' a developing country or recipient of development assistance but always also – and arguably predominantly – the "historical continuation of the Ottoman Empire" (Erdoğan 2016b, 3) and its charity-inspired traditions.

## Turkey's 'neo-Ottoman' exceptionalism

The growing body of implicit and explicit references to Turkey's imperial past have been widely discussed under the banner of 'neo-Ottomanism'. As Hakan Yavuz (2016, 442) has argued, neo-Ottomanism is arguably best understood as referring to a particular notion of Turkey's national self that builds on "rejuvenated memories of Ottoman grandeur and the sense of responsibility for being stewards of the past." While the term Ottomansim has been used to refer to attempts by the Ottoman state apparatus and intellectuals in the late 19th and early 20th century to stabilise the fragile empire (Kayalı 1997, 18f; Yavuz 2016, 441f; Chovanec and Heilo forthcoming), prominent references to the revival of Ottoman legacies ('neo-Ottomanism') in Turkish politics came to the fore in the context of Turgut Özal's leadership (1983-1993, *see Chapter 4*). Özal built on suppressed traditions that had survived despite Kemalist attempts of rigorous westernisation. He not only introduced a "subtle balance of Islamism" and a "new model of coexistence" in Turkish society but also pushed for expanding Turkish economic involvement in its neighbouring regions (Yavuz 2016, 465), including

through the establishment of TIKA in 1992 (TIKA 2019d). AKP representatives have rejected the neo-Ottoman label, arguing that it discredits Turkey's expanding engagement as a neo-imperial endeavour (see Kiper 2013), but in various ways confirm that "the Ottoman past is central for Turkey's history and identity" (Bayer and Keyman 2012, 85).

Building on Özal's legacy, the AKP leadership has not only added a more explicitly religious dimension to its use of historical references but has also de-emphasised Both/And plurality. With regard to international development, the AKP's 'neo-Ottoman' approach has notably followed two strands that highlight Turkey's Neither/Nor exceptionalism. One portrays Turkey as a particularly generous player standing in solidarity with those who need its support (see Kapoor 2008, 86f), not only but predominantly in the Muslim world – even though TIKA has repeatedly highlighted that Turkey assists "without discrimination on the basis of religion, language or race" (Çam 2016, 4).[51] Under the headline "everything for a smile" (TIKA 2018b, 00:05), promotional videos that celebrate TIKA's 25th birthday show faces of individuals from different parts of the world, and they all end with the same line: "*TİKA. Türkiye'dir."* [TIKA. This is Turkey.] (TIKA 2018b, 06:35). TIKA is presented as the quintessence of who and what Turkey is, and how it engages with people outside its borders; and this engagement is said to focus on expressing solidarity through "assistance to the far corners of the world" (TIKA 2018c, 00:09f; see TIKA 2018i; TIKA 2018j). According to Erdoğan, development cooperation is Turkey's way to "speak the language of solidarity" (TIKA 2018d, n.p.) and "sow seeds of love … instead of seeds of conflict" (TIKA 2018e, n.p.). Official accounts link this emphasis on generous solidarity with numbers on how Turkey compares with other major players. The front pages of recent Turkish Development Assistance Reports prominently state that Turkey is "the most generous donor country in the world" (TIKA 2016a; TIKA 2017a), and this statement is taken up across different official communication channels (TIKA 2018a; Ergöçün 2019). With reference to OECD-endorsed ODA statistics (*see Chapter 3*), they highlight that Turkey's contributions clearly stand out as an impressive indicator of the Turkish government's support for those in need (TIKA 2016a; TIKA 2017a; TIKA 2018f; TIKA 2018g; see TIKA 2018k).

The other strand of the exceptionalism plot builds on this emphasis on generosity and portrays Turkey's approach to development as not only comparing favourably to but as being

[51] On the role of Turkish pro-Islamic civil society organisations in development-related processes abroad, see Atalay 2013.

inherently better than DAC donors. *Türk Tipi Kalkınma Modeli* [the Turkish-Style Development Model] (AA 2016b; Çam 2017a; Çam 2017b; TIKA 2018a, TIKA 2018k), official sources argue, categorically differs from Western approaches (TIKA 2012, 12). They underline that Turkey follows a generous – and locally appreciated – results-oriented approach that offers a convincing alternative to the self-interest schemes of traditional donors (Çam 2017a; Çam 2017b; TIKA 2018k, 00:41f). The 'Turkish-Style Development Model' is thus said not only to have "caught the attention of [the] international community" (Çavuşoğlu 2017, 5) for its service to destitute people but also to challenge the DAC-donor dominated *status quo* (Çam 2017a). Presented as inherently superior to "conventional development assistance models" (Çavuşoğlu 2017, 5), the Turkish Model is said to embrace on-the-ground, long-lasting solutions and focus directly on individuals and their needs instead of putting an emphasis on abstract planning processes (Çam 2017a, Çam 2017b; TIKA 2017a; see Kulaklıkaya and Nurdun 2010). While in the early 2000s, reaching 'donor' status and joining the DAC was described as a major goal, recent accounts argue that DAC countries need to change their general attitude and "put their petty interests aside" in order to make space for a "new development cooperation architecture" (Çam 2017a, n.p.)[52] that corresponds to Turkey's focus on "fair partnerships" (TIKA 2018c, 01:50f) with those in need.

These two plot strands – of Turkey being particularly generous (with reference to numbers allegedly calculated based on DAC standards and endorsed by the OECD) and of Turkey's approach being inherently better than others (challenging DAC donors and their frameworks) – provide the backdrop for the most recent expression of Turkey's exceptionalism as *dünyanın vicdanı* [the world's conscience] (TIKA 2018g, 1). TIKA's above-mentioned video (TIKA 2018a, 01:48f; see TIKA 2018h) puts it the following way:

> The world is our home. It would break our heart if any window, any cell, any wall is damaged in our home. Everyone living in our home is under our responsibility… This home is *ours*. This world is *ours*. … The hands that can change the world are *ours*. The ideas that can make this world an even better place are *ours*. The hearts beating to make the world a fairer, more sharing, more compassionate place are *our*s. This is *our* world. … Because we are Turkey. We are TIKA. TIKA carries Anatolia's wisdom and abundance all over the world today. With TIKA's activities Turkey has become the world's most generous country in development aid. For TIKA Mogadishu is right beside Ankara …. There is no such thing as distance for us. If there is someone destitute [i]n any part of the world, we are there … With a Turkish-Style Development

[52] This is arguably part of what analysts close to the AKP have referred to as "anti-hegemonic 'dissident' discourse" (Yeşiltaş 2014, 69; see Çapan and Zarakol 2017).

> Model that is sincere, human-oriented, establishing equal relations, and prioritising local needs we are continuing to be the conscience of the world.

This extract condenses the most important tropes and notions of recent narrative strands to present a comprehensive account of what it depicts as Turkey's position and role: the 'ideas', 'hands' and 'hearts' needed to make the world a better place are Turkey's. Turkey has a responsibility towards those who live in its 'home' – and as Turkey's 'home' is said to be 'the world', Turkey has a – paternalistic and caring – responsibility towards the entire globe, and particularly towards the 'destitute'. With the ability to produce meaningful change through the 'Turkish-Style Development Model' and with its exceptional generosity, Turkey is 'the conscience of the world'. This is taken up in other accounts that suggest that when all others either cannot or do not want to support those in need, Turkey steps in and provides assistance in ways that are particularly effective (Çam 2017a). This superiority is explicitly linked to Ottoman traditions and practices of "shar[ing] the sorrow of needy people" (Erdoğan 2016b, 3), inside and outside the zone of Ottoman influence. The reference to Turkey as the 'world's conscience' has also made it on the front page of the 2017 Turkish Development Assistance Report (TIKA 2018f; see TIKA 2019e, 13) and prominently highlights that, in Erdoğan's (2016, 3; see Erdoğan 2014b, para 6) words, the "Ottoman … heritage [of] protecting the victims and the oppressed people is a significant reference for us." By and large, these accounts narrate the identity and positionality of contemporary Turkey as if it was the globalised successor of a particular version of the Ottoman Empire – one that ignores Ottoman struggles for recognition and survival as well as the (interventionist) assistance, in monetary and other terms, it had received from abroad (Markovits et al. 2018, 18f; see Zarakol 2011; Demirci 2017; Rogan 2017).

## Turkey as self-confident leader

Official narratives about Turkey's generosity and inherent superiority have come with implicit and explicit suggestions that Turkey could or should embrace a more independent role in its neighbouring regions and at the global level. Over the last years the emphasis on Turkey as a facilitator and the use of the bridge metaphor – once a rather popular notion (*see Chapter 4*) – have declined in official accounts. Then-Foreign Minister Davutoğlu (2013, para 21) stated in 2013 that throughout the second half of the 20th century,

> Turkey was neutral, was a bridge. I don't like the term bridge. Bridge is a passive entity between two sides. There are two sides and you are bridge. No, we are … part of all the events.

While the bridge metaphor has not completely vanished and is used with regards to specific activities, 'bridging' is no longer the instruction for action that official accounts ascribe to Turkey as a whole (see Sevin 2012; Çam 2018). While the idea of being "part of both … sides" (Davutoğlu 2013, para 21) and gaining influence through facilitation (*see Chapter 4*) has become less pronounced, Turkey's role as leader in its own right has gained prominence. In the same speech in which he refuted the alleged passivity of the bridge, Davutoğlu (2013, para 21) stated that "[a]s Turkey … you will not run after history. You will run in[to] history and you will lead in front of … history."

The assignation of Turkey as a leader comes to the fore in a variety of ways. The 10th Turkish Development Plan, for instance, explicitly refers to Turkey's leading role in transportation technologies, trade or infrastructure development in "least-developed and developing countries" (TC-KB 2013, 6, 106 and 115). In a world where "developed economies … are losing their competitiveness" (TC-KB 2013, 7), Turkey is set to "successfully sustain the process of development and … be among the leading countries in the future" (TC-KB 2013, 5). In line with the plot of exceptionalism discussed above, official accounts put forward a particular understanding of leadership. By questioning the performance and credentials of *status quo* forces – 'traditional donors' – Turkey is projected as being set to lead through the 'Turkish-Style Development Model'. Turkey's leadership style is not presented as one where the 'leader' is in close contact with his or her 'followers'; instead, Turkey leads through its actions, as what one Turkish diplomat has described as a "lone wolf" (INT-Tur-65) attitude, irrespective of what others do. As the world's 'most generous donor', Turkey stands out by itself; as the world's "shelter" (TC-BDA 2016; see Ekinci 2015) it leads by providing refuge for those who need help; and as the world's 'conscience' it is the first in reaching out to those nobody else is taking care of. In line with what Zeynep Gülşah Çapan and Ayşe Zarakol (2017, 203) have referred to as the trope of "postcolonial saviour," the exceptionalism script that recent official accounts put forward is not – or no longer – turning around the idea of a hybrid facilitating bridge (see Yanık 2011) but portrays Turkey as a strong and independent leader that, unlike other powerful players, is committed to those in need.

The concrete expression of this commitment has mostly played out in countries that look back on historical connections with Turkey, such as the Western Balkans, where a significant part

of TIKA's assistance portfolio has focused on restoring Ottoman monuments (Kočan and Arbeiter 2019; see Erkuş 2017). While Turkish development cooperation now also extends to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America (*see Annex 2.7*), TIKA's most substantial focus has been directed at "Muslim-majority countries that were within the area of influence of the Ottoman Empire and/or that exhibit ethno-cultural connections to Turkey" (Hausmann 2014, 1). The impact of former colonial and imperial ties on development assistance patterns has been widely established with regard to former European colonial powers as well as Russia and the US (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Round and Odedokun 2004; Apodaca 2017); and, as Carol Lancaster (2007) has highlighted, political and economic interests have played a major role in post-colonial donor/recipient relationships. While there has been a debate among historians about whether the Ottoman Empire can be classified as a colonising force (Türesay 2013; Minawi 2016; see Makdisi 2002), Turkish officials have insisted that Turkey lacks the colonial past that has hampered the engagement of major DAC donors in development cooperation schemes (Kulaklıkaya 2010). Instead of portraying Turkey as the successor state of an empire that did not only conquer territories on three continents but was also part of major geopolitical power games in 19th century Europe (Minawi 2016; see Zarakol 2011, 115f), Turkish officials thus imply that Turkey can build on its Ottoman legacy to embrace "an imperial vision without being imperialist" (Yavuz 2016, 456). Asked about the links between Turkish development assistance and the country's history, Turkish officials in Ankara did not only categorically refute neo-colonial allegations but instead highlighted Turkey's own vulnerabilities in line with what Berch Berberoğlu (1981, 277) once referred to as "the imperialist penetration of Turkey" through external forces (Int-T-34; Int-T-47). One TIKA official (Int-T-41) put it the following way:

> We once were an empire, but we did not have colonial ties with all these places. That is why we are different [from major European donors]. Recipients do not hate us; they know that we don't have a hidden agenda. They know that we have got rid of [Western imposition]; they know we are special.

Outside governmental circles, notions of Turkey as special or unique (see Kili 1980, 393) have been taken up across the board to make sense of Turkish positionalities. During the first decade of AKP rule (post-2002) in particular, observers not only analysed official Turkish claims but also added their own superlatives. Turkey was referred to as a "rising star" (Bruno 2008; European Parliament 2011; Scott 2012) or future "superpower" (Burns 2012). Journalists and academics in Turkey and elsewhere began to engage extensively with Turkey's 'rise' (Bayer

and Keyman 2012; Çağaptay 2014; Gürzel 2014; Kubicek et al. 2015; Parlar Dal 2018; Süsler 2019) and largely agreed that Turkish engagement with development cooperation and humanitarian assistance was part of a broader approach to expand ties with different parts of the 'developing world' and project 'soft power' (İpek 2015; see Çevik 2015; 2016; 2019). As Onur Sazak and Auveen Woods (2017, para 13) have argued, "the opening of a new embassy, TIKA offices, new Turkish Airlines routes, and an influx of development programs and commercial activities" have become a template for Turkish engagement across regions, from Ivory Coast (TC-DB n.d.f) to Ethiopia (Kemal 2018, 269) and the Philippines (TC-DB 2019a). Together with Turkish Airlines, TIKA is now part of a set of "iconic brands" (Robins 2014, 21) supposed to highlight Turkey's contributions to global connectivity and cooperation.

For Turkey's recipients, the most palpable feature of the 'Turkish-Style Development Model' has been TIKA's concern for a demand-driven approach. In a comprehensive review of Turkish development cooperation modalities, Jeannine Hausmann (2014, 13) found that TIKA projects tended to be of limited size and duration but took into account recipient countries' national development strategies and seemed to focus, more often than not, "on the desires and needs of … partner governments." Those at the receiving end of Turkish assistance have indeed stressed the positive aspects of their links with Turkey, as illustrated by insights from relations with Somalia (*see Chapter 4*). During interviews, diplomats from countries receiving Turkish assistance referred to Turkey as "a good country" (Int-G-6) or "a brother" (Int-G-11); and opinion polls in Bosnia have shown that Turkish assistance is perceived as particularly substantive when compared with the performance of other providers (Santrucek 2019; see Dönmez 2019). Anecdotal evidence from interviews with working-level personnel in charge of coordinating Turkey's incoming assistance in the Foreign Ministries of Hungary and Mexico – two countries where TIKA recently opened offices – suggests that while partner country officials can be slightly overwhelmed by Turkish activism, they appreciate TIKA's readiness to engage. As a Hungarian official stated, "they [TIKA counterparts] are so incredibly ready to do stuff, they just came in and wanted to get things done; they asked us time and again; … I was really impressed" (Int-G-33). This readiness to engage was also taken up by a Mexican official (Int-M-16):

> To be honest, it was all a bit too much at first. They wanted to get started straight away, they wanted to know what we wanted from them. … It took us a while to get back to them, they were so quick with everything, no cumbersome back and forth as with other donors, no templates, just 'bamm', the Turkish way.

The hyperactive engagement attributed to Mexico in multilateral circles (*see Chapter 4*) thus resonates with how Turkey's performance as a development cooperation provider is perceived by its partner governments. This has also – and maybe particularly – been the case for Turkey's support for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In a major review of all LDC-related initiatives, TIKA (2016b) reported that Turkey had set up projects in all 48 LDCs and had exceeded its initially pledged annual contributions to LDCs of 200 million USD dollars. Opinion pieces by observers and public statements by LDC government officials (see AllAfrica 2017; AA 2018; Dahir 2019; Iqbal 2019) thanking Turkey for its "steadfast support" (Qureshi 2019, para 1) or "noble humanitarian position" (Ahmed 2017, para 6) abound, highlighting not only Turkish development assistance but also its support during humanitarian emergencies.

Over recent years, the linkages between the traditionally distinct spheres of (short-term) humanitarian and (long-term) development assistance have come to play a more general role in Turkey's positionalities. Praise for Turkey's contributions to humanitarian concerns had already been substantial (see Bayer and Keyman 2012) but increased further when the Turkish government decided to open the country's doors to Syrian nationals (Hausmann 2014; Tank 2015; Keyman 2016). As Selim Sazak (2019, n.p.; cf. Sönmez 2019) has put it in a recent Foreign Policy article:

> The courage and generosity that countries like Turkey have shown cannot be overstated: They opened their doors to millions of people in need when the rest of the world barely lifted a finger. In Turkey alone, the response to the refugee crisis cost more than $35 billion, and most of it came out of the country's own pocket.

This appraisal resonates with the Turkish government's insistence that "Turkey has prevented a major humanitarian crisis in Europe" (Çavuşoğlu 2019, n.p.). Against the backdrop of Turkey's hosting of Syrians, a particularly visible event through which the Turkish government had decided to promote its "global leadership" (Keyman 2016, 2279) in humanitarian affairs was the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 briefly mentioned above (*see Chapter 4*), convened by the UN Secretary-General and organised by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). According to OCHA officials, traditional donors were initially reluctant to commit to the long(er)-term support for humanitarian operations that the Summit was asking for (Int-IO-7; Int-IO-11). Strong voices within the G77 – particularly the Chinese government – in turn were hesitant to support a multi-stakeholder process, instead discouraging other countries to engage (Int-IO-11) and highlighting afterwards that the

legitimacy of the Summit had been hampered by the absence of an formal inter-governmental agreement (see G77 2017). While significant parts of 'North' and 'South' were thus not particularly committed to Summit preparations, the Turkish government invested considerable financial and political resources to push, in the words of an OCHA official, for "durable solutions and an explicit agreement about responsibility sharing" (Int-IO-2).

According to UN officials, Turkey's decision to host the World Humanitarian Summit had been based on a double motivation:

> It was a historical event and they wanted to get their name out there; but they also wanted to put the world to shame about how little other countries had done to shoulder the weight of Syrian refugees (Int-IO-11).

While Turkey's connecting function as player combining institutional capacity with on-the-ground credibility as refugee host was the reason why the UN Secretary-General had decided to hold the Summit in Istanbul (Int-IO-7; Int-IO-11; *see Chapter 4*), interview accounts suggest that Turkish decision-makers saw it as a welcome opportunity to distract from domestic tensions – including within the AKP – and showcase Turkish leadership.[53] Different not only from the "poor Syrians" but also from all sorts of old or new donors, particularly EU member states "incapable of getting their act together" (Int-T-37), Turkey was set to "shine" (Int-T-17). This resonates with Hausmann's (2014, 2) analysis of Turkey as a particularly "self-confident donor country [that] considers itself to be an alternative to both traditional as well as other new aid providers". Instead of joining the official agreement of humanitarian donors launched at the Summit (IASC 2019), the Turkish government highlighted its exceptional position and circumstances – not only through showcasing Turkish support for Syrian nationals (see Özerim 2016) but also by pointing to the historical tradition of Turkish and Ottoman solidarity with those in need (TC-BDA 2016). In the words of a Turkish diplomat, "we don't need to join their schemes; we do things our own way" (Int-T-9).

This self-confidence had also come to the fore years earlier during the 2011 UN conference on LDCs in Istanbul, when the Turkish government made it clear that it was determined to continue leading multilateral efforts on LDC support. As a UN official recalled during an interview:

[53] Less than three weeks before the Summit, Davutoğlu resigned as Prime Minister amid intra-AKP quarrels (Letsch 2016).

> A murmur went through the audience [at the 2011 conference] when Turkey announced that it would also host the [Istanbul Agenda] review process. I think many people thought that was quite dominant, quite aggressive … But it had been said publicly, and I think it would have been pretty difficult to hold [the review meeting] somewhere else (Int-IO-22).

Against usual practice in multilateral affairs, Turkey had unilaterally stepped forward to claim ownership of the LDC agenda process; and irrespective of annoyed reactions to Turkey's advance, the 2016 mid-term review took place in the Turkish city of Antalya (UN 2014; UN-OHRLLS 2016). Self-confidence has also accompanied Turkish support for Syrian nationals since the onset of the Syrian war. The Turkish government has insisted that the world – and particularly the EU – should not only acknowledge Turkey's role as host of millions of refugees but also expand their financial support (Özerim 2016; Nielsen 2019). In 2017, Turkey cancelled its participation in an international donor conference as it "was not satisfied with an EU response over the format of the meeting and its own title" (Hürriyet Daily News 2017, n.p.). In addition to tensions with EU governments over preparations for Turkey's 2017 constitutional referendum (see Barigazzi and Herszenhorn 2017), the Turkish government did not want to be treated the same way as its homologues from Jordan and Lebanon and had asked for a formal status at the meeting reflecting its economic and political weight (Int-IO-33;Int-IO-34; see Bulur 2017). As Deputy Prime Minister Yalçın Akdoğan (2016, 1) argued in 2016, "It is all the more meaningful that Turkey has exceeded her commitments to LDCs in the face of … the deployment of approximately 10 billion USD to Syrian guests since 2011." Its exceptional double commitment – not only to LDCs but also to Syrian refugees – was thought to solidify claims that Turkey acted indeed, through its humanitarian and development assistance, as the world's 'shelter' or 'conscience'.

For Caroline Levander and Walter Mignolo (2011, 3), Turkey is one of the countries that have most visibly embarked on "moving toward new horizons of life delinking from the global north." Leaving 'Northern'-induced reference frameworks behind by refusing to integrate in the established binary of 'weak South' vs. 'strong North', Turkey's approach of highlighting its exceptionality through rhetoric and deeds contributes to a *de facto* 'delinking' from the established setup. Turkey's relations with the world, 'North' or 'South', are not described as horizontal, not even in theory. Turkey's approach is not only about combining 'the best of both worlds' (*see Chapter 4*) but also about underlining *distance* to both 'North' and 'South'. On the one hand, references to Turkish support being "practical and useful" (Mohamud 2016) or "groundbreaking and exemplary" (Eliasson 2016) are interpreted as marking a clear

difference between Turkey and 'traditional donors'. As highlighted above, the tone towards DAC member countries has become rougher over the last years; and TIKA President Çam has repeatedly castigated DAC donors' "so-called assistance that creates a ... unilateral and exploitative relationship" (Çam 2017, n.p.). As the 'world's most generous donor' and with reference to the 'Turkish-Style Development Model', Turkey has distanced itself explicitly from traditional donor countries; and there have also been "polemic attempts" (Hausmann 2014, 11) by Turkish officials to dissociate Turkey's engagement from what has been described as China's more recent neo-colonial tendencies (Kulaklıkaya 2010; see Chan 2018; Wu 2019). On the other hand, recipient countries – epitomised by the LDCs – have persistently been framed as those parts of the world that need Turkey's help. Distance is thus also kept towards them, albeit in a different way. While official accounts and Turkish representatives do use "family tropes" (Mawdsley 2019, 11) to underline their links with the recipients of their assistance, the solidarity between Turkey and its "brothers" (Int-T-17) or "sister nations" (Int-T-36) is predicated upon Turkey being the stronger, richer or wiser sibling. In resonance with official narratives that draw on what is presented as Ottoman heritage, the Neither/Nor exceptionality that comes out of these recent Turkish engagement patterns suggests that Turkey – with considerable distance from both weak 'South' and corrupted 'North' – is set for 21st-century greatness.

## 2. Excluded: outside 'North' and 'South'

While Neither/Nor contains the notion of the exceptional and extra-ordinary, it also points to a less glamorous dimension of not fitting in: the experience of struggling to find a place in or explicitly being excluded from established reference frameworks. With regard to the binaries of international development politics, exclusion from the spaces and templates offered to those who belong to 'North' or 'South' conditions positionalities associated with specific functions, such as those of bulwarks or barriers that serve to protect the 'developed' from the 'developing' world. During the Cold War, Turkey's geopolitical location made it an important "buffer state" (Müftüler-Bac 1996, 259; see McGhee 1954; Kaplan 1994; Barnett 2003;

Bozdağlioğlu 2003) in the strategic back and forth between 'East' and 'West', reminiscent of earlier notions of the Ottoman Empire as bulwark between Russia and Western European powers (Rogan 2015; see Markovits et al. 2018, 18). Buffer and bulwark imagery has continued to play a major role in how Turkey's position has come to be judged from the outside, more recently with regard to questions of terrorist networks and migration flows (see Keyman 2016). For the EU, Turkey is not only a potential bridge (*see Chapter 4*) but also, and maybe primarily, a "bulwark against the growing danger of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism" (Yılmaz 2009, 16) and a "barrier" (Robins 2014, 25) supposed to hold back unwanted migration from Syria and elsewhere.

The so-called EU-Turkey Refugee Deal (European Council 2016; Pitel and Peel 2020) is the most explicit expression of that rationale and has also found its way into development assistance statistics. The largest part of ODA Turkey currently receives is not directed at the promotion of Turkey's "economic development and welfare" (OECD 2018a, para 1) as such but at assisting the Turkish government with the support it provides to millions of Syrian *misafir* [guests] (Int-G-38; Int-G-39; see OECD 2019g). A third of ODA that Turkey received in 2016 and 2017 was reported as humanitarian aid (OECD 2019g) directed at Syrians. Parts of ODA flows reported under other categories – such as education or social infrastructure – have also funded projects and initiatives supporting Syrians (Int-G-37; Int-G-38; see Bilgehan 2017); and major DAC donors such as Germany and Japan have set up bilateral initiatives supposed to support Turkey's hosting functions (Alacacı 2018; GIZ 2019c). While Turkey's readiness to act as a 'buffer' has led to feelings of relief among European decision-makers (see BBC 2016; DW 2019), recent developments have put a different light on what has generally been perceived as Turkey's considerable generosity. Turkish plans to relocate Syrians – who as 'guests' only have a temporary and easily revocable status – to Turkey's own buffer zone in Syrian territory has sparked widespread condemnation (Akıncı 2019; Beaumont 2019; Koseoğlu 2019). For EU leaders, the importance of Turkey's bulwark function has so far trumped other concerns; but in light of serious criticism on both sides and challenges to its implementation (see Serdar 2019), the future of the EU-Turkey deal is far from certain.

US motivations for providing assistance to Mexico somewhat mirror the EU rationale for providing funding to Turkey. For the US, the surge of its ODA to Mexico correlates with an increase in financial support for the Mérida Initiative signed in 2007 (Seelke 2009; Olson 2017) that is partly classified as ODA (Int-N-52). While the Mérida Initiative was set up as a "security

and rule-of-law partnership to address drug trafficking and crime" between the US, Mexico and Central American countries, it also aims "to address root causes of violence and supporting efforts to reduce drug demand and build a 'culture of lawfulness' through education programs" (Seelke 2019, 1; see US State Department n.d.). Roughly 115 million USD have been spent on human rights and crime prevention projects, executed through USAID (Seelke 2019). A major rationale behind US support for the strengthening of Mexican institutions has been to halt unwanted migration not only from Mexico itself but also from Mexico's southern neighbours (Blitzer 2019). Accordingly, the US State Department has cited "Mexico's apprehension of more than 520,000 Central American migrants from 2015 to 2018" (Seelke 2019, 2) as an indicator providing evidence for the 'success' of the Mérida Initiative.

According to the Mexican government, the development-related component of US assistance would need to increase substantially in order to effectively address migration-related challenges (see Lafuente and García 2018; Krauze 2019b; Ore 2019). The US government, however, has suggested that Mexico and the US should instead sign a "safe third country" agreement, meaning that Central American migrants would be sent straight back across the border in case they made it to the US, in order to apply for asylum in Mexico (Stargardter 2018). While the Mexican government has underlined that it was not interested in such a step (AlJazeera 2019), the Mexican Ambassador to the US, Martha Bárcena, has referred to the suggested US-Mexico arrangement as a poor copy of the EU-Turkey deal, leading the analyst Leon Krauze (2019a, n.p.) to conclude that in order for any potential arrangement to work, "Mexico would need from the United States the sort of commitment Turkey got from the European Union."

Questions of migration and development thus highlight some of the most striking parallels between Mexico and Turkey's positionalities in the international geographies of power and wealth. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987, 3), both countries are located right where "the Third World grates against the First and bleeds." Their positions between some of the most prosperous and some of the most violent and/or poorest places on earth have turned them into key players for addressing large-scale migration issues. In this context, the meaning of 'development assistance' has shifted considerably. The "promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries" is no longer – if it ever was – the "main objective" (OECD 2018a, para 4) behind ODA. Instead, both Turkey and Mexico are prime examples for practices where countries receive ODA to "stem the flow of refugees" (Apodaca

2017, 7) towards the 'North'. From that perspective, Mexico and Turkey are what stands between the rich and the poor, the fortunate and the destitute. As places neither here nor there, they are transit zones of some of the world's most prominent migration routes. Depending on the vantage point one embraces, they are protecting bulwarks supported by 'Northern' ODA or obstacles towards what is hoped to be a more secure and prosperous future for 'Southern' migrants.

## Multilateral isolation

Being treated as buffer, barrier or bulwark contributes to positionalities of explicit or implicit exclusion that often come with experiences of loneliness, isolation and (self)assignations of outcast or pariah that highlight the lack of ties to established groups or categories (Geldenhuys 2004; Lawal 2012). In the formalised venues of multilateral development diplomacy at the UN, official voting patterns are one of the most visible indicators for identifying (the lack of) alliances and patterns of collective belonging. For Turkey, there has been a clear trend: while Turkish representatives had previously voted on some Second Committee resolutions with the 'South' (UN-DL 2019a) and on others with the 'North' (UN-DL 2019b) they have, since the end of the Cold War, consistently abstained from votes on controversial resolutions. Sometimes this has been in line with moves undertaken by DAC member countries, but overall Turkey has not adapted to 'Northern' voting patterns (see UN-DL 2019a; UN-DL 2019b). In the case of the resolution on the New International Economic Order, for instance, Turkey initially voted affirmative with the G77 but, since 1987 – roughly at the time of the introduction of economic liberalization policies under Turgut Özal and the first attempts of setting up initiatives for Turkish development assistance abroad – has consistently abstained. This dynamic is also reflected by the fact that Turkey has been one of only three countries to abstain from votes on the Agenda 21 resolution that exemplifies the re-emerging North/South fault lines on development at the UN General Assembly (see UN-DL 2019c).

For large parts of UN audiences, Turkey is an abstainer at the margins when it comes to day-to-day processes on multilateral development issues (Int-IO-9; Int-IO-24). "Turkey? I haven't seen them in a long time" (Int-G-3) was the standard answer by member state representatives and multilateral officials I interviewed in New York. In interview accounts of Turkish officials, in turn, this corresponded to experiences of isolation. As one Turkish diplomat put it, "we are

a little bit alone. They [G77] don't need us. We just sit there by ourselves, most of the time. … Not much fun" (Int-T-15). Broadly speaking, isolation and loneliness evolve around experiences of "not feeling close to anyone" (Reiche 2016, para 5) and, with Hannah Arendt (1958, 188), undermine "the capacity to act" meaningfully, particularly in multilateral circles where unilateral action is usually frowned upon. As Philip Robins (2014, 7) has argued, positionalities at odds with established groupings in the international system "invariably contain… a heightened sense of 'me-feeling'" that stands in opposition to the 'we-feeling' of (regional) alliances. This 'me-feeling' is not only a key feature of Turkish experiences but also comes to the fore in Mexican stories of (potential or relative) isolation when representatives of other countries retreat to coordinate (Int-M-4; Int-M-5; Int-M-38). As Günther Maihold (2016, 545) has argued, it was a combination of Mexico's post-NAFTA "marginalization in Latin America" and Brazil's claims to being the regional voice of the South in the 2000s that contributed to "Mexico's loneliness" by "restrict[ing] the recognition of Mexico's definition of 'bridge,' and push[ing] it to the sidelines not only in Latin America but also on the international level at large" (549).

Despite their partially successful claims of being proactive facilitators, connectors and champions (*see Chapter 4*), Mexican and Turkish officials have repeatedly experienced unease in moments of isolation in multilateral circles. As interview accounts suggest, these feelings have unfolded or intensified in light of dynamics that, at first sight, seem to have little to do with international development politics. In Mexico, serious challenges abound domestically, from the influence of transnationally active *narco* cartels, widespread violence and pockets of *de facto* statelessness, to elevated and increasing homicide levels, disappearances and extortion, coupled with widespread impunity and corruption (Galvan 2019; Phillips 2019; Seelke 2019). According to analysts, these challenges have meant that Mexico has been unable to live up to its foreign policy potential and ambitions over the last two decades (see Ruiz Sandoval 2009; Hurtado and García Paz 2013; Maihold 2016). A substantial number of Mexican diplomats I interviewed explained that incidents such as the unsolved disappearance of 43 college students in Ayotzinapa in 2014 or high-profile corruption cases (EUM-S 2014; Pellicer 2019) had hampered Mexico's international standing, also with regard to perceptions of Mexico's role and position in development cooperation processes (Int-M-18; Int-M-39; Int-M-46). "It is not only that we are not a developed country", one Mexican official based in Mexico City put it:

> We are also unable to take care of things here; it is a disgrace; how can I look people from other countries in the eye and tell them that we have come to support them? When we ourselves do not manage to tackle our own issues? (Int-M-40).

In a similar vein, Mexico's activism in multilateral development circles is seen critically. In the words of a Mexican diplomat based abroad:

> All countries have their dark chapters, but I don't think there are many that have so consistently failed in getting on the right track [like Mexico]. You can blame the *gringos* [US] for everything, but at the end of the day there is a lot that we ourselves could do. But we don't. So I think that [in multilateral circles] we should shut up and stop running around and make a fool of ourselves (Int-M-46).

In Turkey, feelings of international isolation have a long and rich trajectory well beyond multilateral development circles. The marginalisation of the Ottoman Empire as a nominal member of the 19th century European state-system preceded the Empire's demise after World War One (Ayoob 1989, 69; see Luard 1990, 30; Zarakol 2011, 111f; Lawal 2012, 226; cf. Chovanec and Heilo forthcoming). For the Republic of Turkey, in turn, experiences of inferiority towards the 'West' (Zarakol 2011, 156) and tensions with neighbouring countries have played a defining role for questions of national identity; and there has been a more general tendency among different parts of Turkish society to see themselves as potential victims of outside forces. Philip Robins (2014, 18), for instance, recalls the old saying that "Turks would only write down a list of country-friends in pencil … while the names of enemies would be written in ink." Particularly since the 2016 coup attempt, the Turkish government has, in the words of Julian de Medeiros (2018, para 1; see Carney 2018), relied on "strategies of political paranoia" that have pushed public discourse further towards a 'post-truth' era. There has been an upsurge in official and clandestine narratives about the malign forces that try to sabotage Turkey from the inside, such as the Gülenists (Aydıntaşbaş 2016), or the outside, such as the US Central Intelligence Agency (Georgy and Özkan 2016); and Doğan Gürpınar (2019) has gone as far as referring to Turkey as the "conspiracy nation."

The widespread sensibility towards the role of unintelligible forces has shaped the outlook of not only those in charge of Turkey's engagement with international development but also parts of Turkey's bilateral and multilateral audiences. During interviews I conducted in Ankara, interlocutors across the board – in more conservative and more liberal circles, in government offices and among journalists or NGO workers – shared the view that Turkey was under attack,

from inside and outside the country (Int-T-6; Int-T-18; Int-T-21). In Sofia – where I met Bulgarian diplomats and journalists working on Turkey – one of my respondents insisted that Turkey was likely to soon be "erased" (Int-N-50) by a confluence of various factors, including Russian and Iranian invasions; and a UN official in New York told me that "everybody knows that Turkey is constantly at the brink of disintegration" (Int-IO-30).

While this is anecdotal evidence, the variety of 'stories about Turkey' circulating in diplomatic and multilateral spheres provides an idiosyncratic backdrop for how Turkish engagement is perceived and evaluated in international development circles. One of the most sobering experiences for Turkey's multilateral standing was arguably the bid for a 2015-2016 non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council. Turkey had held a non-permanent seat for the 2009-2010 cycle and decided to apply again for 2015-2016 membership, a rather unusual decision in a context where 188 countries are supposed to share 12 rotating non-permanent seats. The Turkish Foreign Ministry justified this step arguing that:

> The main reason for announcing our candidacy once again, not long after our non-permanent membership in the UNSC for 2009-2010, emanates from our belief that Turkey will provide significant added value to global peace and security in an era of critical and rapid change in international affairs (TC-DB 2011).

As then-Prime Minister Davutoğlu (2014, n.p.) stated just before the vote in 2014:

> If we are elected, and we believe it's a great possibility, we will be the first country in the world to be elected [to the Security Council] for a second time, after a five-year break. This shows Turkey's importance.

UN officials, member state representatives and also Turkish officials all stated in interviews that a major motivation for Turkey's engagement with the post-2015 development agenda process (that began in 2013) had been a high-level decision by the Turkish government to showcase its commitment to multilateral causes in the lead-up to the General Assembly vote about Security Council membership (Int-IO-10; Int-G-13; Int-T-2). Despite a visible increase in engagement across fora and issue areas, including development-related processes, the Turkish government was taken by surprise when the UN General Assembly turned down its UN Security Council membership application: while 151 UN member states had voted in favour of Turkey for the 2009-2010 seat, the 2015-2016 bid only brought 60 votes representing not even a third of UN member states (Avni 2014; BBC 2014; Sassounian 2014). As one observer put it, this was a reflection of the fact that Turkey had been "busy making enemies all over the region and beyond" (Smart 2014, n.p.), prompting the majority of UN

member states to reject what another observer openly critical about Turkish engagement called "Turkey's hostile policies both at home and abroad" (Sassounian 2014, n.p.). For a range of reasons – including Turkey's role in Syria and other regional geopolitical tensions – a diverse set of countries including Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia but also Iran as well as Cyprus, Greece and Israel had actively been lobbying against Turkey (see Avni 2014; Sassounian 2014). In the words of a UN official:

> They felt too sure about themselves; in the end they stood there alone. They didn't have the G77 behind them, they didn't have the EU, they were so full of themselves, it was all pretty embarrassing (Int-IO-22).

Since that vote, Turkish representatives have emphasised their critique of the composition of the UN Security Council and the current setup of multilateral politics more broadly (Duran 2015; Dedeoğlu 2016; Hürriyet Daily News 2018; see Davutoğlu 2013). Under the slogan *Dünya Beşten Büyüktür* [the world is bigger than five] Turkish representatives have been lobbying to make all seats at the Security Council non-permanent (see Erdoğan 2014a; AA 2016a; Duran 2017). Framing Turkey's stance as "the biggest-ever rise against global injustice" (TC-CB 2018, n.p.), Erdoğan has also suggested that this is a broader critique of the biased political and economic structures dominated by the 'Western-Northern' world that shape the potential for development across the globe. Against this backdrop, references to the 'Turkish-Style Development Model' and Turkey's provider role as the world's 'shelter' or 'conscience' have been taken as evidence that the Turkish government is doing its share to counter the root causes of an unfair *status quo* (see Islam and Cansu 2018).

While voices close to the Turkish government have framed this more belligerent rhetoric as strength, representatives of UN entities and member states I interviewed almost unanimously interpreted it as a sign of Turkey's lack of countenance. In the words of a UN official who had closely accompanied Turkish engagement during the 2030 Agenda process: "They didn't get what they wanted, and now they are sulking; it just shows that they have an overblown ego and don't know how to handle reality" (Int-IO-34). Following Robins's (2014, 18) reflection on "lonely states", Turkey's experience with the 2015-2016 Security Council bid followed a rather typical pattern: an over-confident and overbearing multilateral performance was followed by the realisation of miscalculation and several rounds of "self-pitying" that led to a heightened sense of isolation by both Turkish officials and its multilateral audiences. Initial expectations of showcasing 'Turkey's importance' did not materialise and instead turned into what a

Turkish diplomat I interviewed referred to as "a nightmare – in the end we were a lot more isolated [than before]; and all the hard work, for nothing" (Int-T-15).

On top of that, Turkey has also lost attraction as a destination for international gatherings. The 2013 Gezi protests and the purges following the 2016 coup attempt, together with the various terrorist attacks that hit Turkey between 2015 and 2017, have contributed to the perception of Turkey as "an unsafe place" (Int-IO-5; see Gardner 2018; Dickinson 2019). While events in Istanbul used to be an attractive option for diplomats and UN officials – "I loved the Bosporus" (Int-G-14) was a typical remark during interviews in New York – travels let alone relocations to Turkey are a lot less popular than a decade ago. As an official at the UN Secretariat put it:

> It is about terrorism and the crackdowns and the increasing arbitrariness of the [Turkish] government. … Istanbul is less of a magnet now. Nobody really wants to go to Turkey anymore (Int-IO-11).

For UNDP, recent ups and downs in Turkey's attractiveness have been particularly noticeable. After New York, Istanbul is currently UNDP's most relevant location worldwide, even though the organisation had no presence in the city before 2011. Decisions to move a regional centre and a headquarters unit to Istanbul and establish a global policy centre there (*see Chapter 4*) were hailed as visionary and strategic when UNDP was eager to partner up with Turkey as an "emerging major player" (UNDP 2012, n.p.; see UNDP 2014). In the current context, however, the analysis is more sobering. As one UNDP official put it diplomatically: "Were we to take these decisions now, we would probably need to take other parameters into account" (Int-IO-31). For Turkish diplomats, these shifts in international perceptions have had a palpable impact on their work. As one of them put it: "We are more isolated than before … after all that happened. I mean, who wants to be seen with Turks these days? It is tough times" (Int-T-49).

## Ontological limbo

Experiences of isolation in multilateral spaces are connected to feelings of insecurity and confusion that, in different ways, have accompanied both Mexican and Turkish officials in their everyday realities. Combined with insights from months-long in-depth shadowing in 2017 and participant observations from 2013 to 2015, interview accounts suggest that Mexican officials

have faced a particular set of limbo experiences – financially, strategically and institutionally – in their day-to-day engagement with international development processes. Financially, budgetary limitations have not only put a general question mark behind AMEXCID's capacity to fulfil its mandate but also impact the lifespan of concrete engagement mechanisms and cooperation projects. On top of generally limited budget lines, recurring additional budget cuts have increased the overall sense of financial insecurity (see El Financiero 2016; Bibian 2017). Those in charge of taking decisions about where and how to cut spending get used to reviewing budgets and tend to find more or less 'creative' ways to ensure that staff numbers are not affected and key schemes continue operating (Int-M-9; Int-M-15).

The general sense of limbo, however, is only temporarily relegated. Strategically, it often seems unclear what exactly AMEXCID is or should be. While some officials are quick at referring to official documents that describe the agency as coordinator and administrator of Mexico's development cooperation (Int-M-10; Int-M-13), others repeatedly point to what they experience as a misfit: many feel that AMEXCID tries to play the "multilateral development game" (Int-M-17) while lacking a more profound engagement with the concrete aspects of development cooperation projects (Int-M-6; Int-M-22; Int-M-24). Mexico's support for multilateral or multi-stakeholder platforms – such as the Global Partnership or the Financing for Development agenda (*see Chapter 4*) – is viewed as depending on specific individuals in influential positions within the agency who have been able to carve out a space for themselves and their areas of interest (Int-M-25; Int-M-39). Whether this corresponds to what is best for AMEXCID and Mexico's development cooperation, they hold, is mostly ignored (Int-M-27; Int-M-50). Torn between being a "wannabe diplomatic player" (Int-M-7) and the lack of development-related public policy expertise, many officials see the agency in a constant strategic limbo.

Institutionally, frequent leadership changes have meant that AMEXCID has gone through several rounds of organisational adjustment since its inception. Five Executive Directors have led AMEXCID over the first eight years (2012-2019) of its existence, and together with changes in the position of Foreign Minister (also five since the setup of AMEXCID) not only the leadership style, preferences and office dynamics have changed but also AMEXCID's standing in the Foreign Ministry hierarchy. Serving under an Executive Director (Juan Manuel Valle, 2013-2015) with a close link to the Minister's office (José Antonio Meade, 2013-2015) has meant something quite different from working with an Executive Director (Gina Casar, 2015-

2017) who obviously did not enjoy a particular high standing in the eyes of the Minister (Claudia Ruiz Massieu, 2015-2017). Casar's protracted departure (2016-2017) from her position as Director put the entire agency in a particularly awkward situation: in addition to the general lack of clarity and predictability, the months-long waiting for an imminent change and the attempts of dealing with it somewhat epitomised the limbo experience of AMEXCID officials (Int-M-6; Int-M-9; Int-M-10; Int-M-22; Int-M-50).

Mexican officials' day-to-day engagement has thus unfolded in organisational realities shaped by different kinds of limbo experiences. In one way or another, all officials I interviewed made references to the inherent tensions in what some of them referred to as Mexico's position as a G1 bridge, a hyperactive yet potentially isolated facilitator, or a *Llanero Solitario* [Lone Ranger] (Figueroa 2017b, n.p.) that provides development assistance without telling anyone about it. Experiences of financial, strategic and institutional limbo are thus embedded in more general notions of ontological insecurity (see Giddens 1991; Steele 2008; Zarakol 2016) and confusion. The following account summarises a general set of impressions emerging during interviews with AMEXCID officials:

> We are not a proper donor; we are not a typical recipient anymore, but we need to coordinate with GIZ, JICA and all the other [bilateral and multilateral] agencies. I think we are stuck half-way. We try to be strong and visible, at the UN, the OECD, we try to do things in Central America … but I think most people here don't really have a clue who we actually are (Int-M-17).

Both individually and as part of AMEXCID more generally, officials I interviewed felt 'stuck half-way' and pressured to work as if AMEXCID was a 'proper' development agency with expertise, institutional capacity and a meaningful budget. While most of them seemed to manage playing their role, many deplored the lack of a template or reference point for defining who exactly they were or who they were supposed to be in the bureaucratic realities 'at home' or the multilateral platforms 'abroad'. Some told G1-jokes or shrugged (Int-M-3; Int-M-33), while others spoke more explicitly about the threat of isolation (Int-M-5; Int-M-22; Int-M-24). What connects all of their accounts is the insight that there is no obvious box Mexicans belong to, no institutionalised place in the field of international development that they call home:

> We are by ourselves. There are not many countries like us. Sometimes this is an advantage … but sometimes it is tough, and I think most of us are confused about who we actually are; and so we frantically run around and try to be part of everything and to be friends with everyone and in the end it all feels a bit shallow (Int-M-37).

This perspective throws a somewhat different light on Mexico's official Both/And claims (*see Chapter 4*), suggesting that efforts of being 'everywhere with everyone' are actually part of an attempt to avoid a Neither/Nor scenario. In multilateral settings, a proactive or over-committed stance is seen as vital because for Mexico, as one seasoned diplomat put it, "nothing is automatic – if we don't move, we drown" (Int-M-7). In order to stand their ground in a field dominated by role expectations shaped through North/South fault lines, Mexican officials feel they need to fight the threat of double exclusion (Int-M-22; Int-M-34) and the scenario of being treated as an "outsider" (Maihold 2016, 554). The main response to that challenge at both institutional and individual levels has been a Both/And-inspired approach of facilitating and connecting that, as a Mexican civil society representative remarked,

> sometimes looks like an end in itself; [Mexican diplomats] often don't seem to really care about outcomes, they just want things to happen so that they can take group photos and schedule a follow-up meeting (Int-N-6).

Mexico's substantial presence in multilateral fora also has the (side) effect of diverting attention away from aspects of engagement where Mexico has been found lacking. According to more critical or outspoken officials, Mexico's proactive engagement with the GPEDC or the FfD agenda has been an attempt to "cover up [AMEXCID's] missing capacity" (Int-M-27) in terms of financial resources, technical expertise and substantial experience in "how development cooperation should actually be done" (Int-M-6; see Int-M-22; Int-M-24; Int-M-42).

For TIKA officials, in turn, the question is not so much whether Turkey engages as a proper donor but rather what donorship means for Turkey, and where it is taking them. During interviews, one official found the following words to express what many others had told me in less graphic ways:

> I feel like we are in an open-ended elevator. We have pushed buttons, and now we are on the ride to a place nobody else has been [to]. We are going into a direction nobody knew existed. It is as if we [were] trying to leave everyone else behind (Int-T-8).

While some who had been at TIKA for more than a decade stated that they had initially felt "a great excitement" (Int-T-37) when it became apparent that development cooperation would receive political attention from the highest level of government, most officials I interviewed were more cautious when it came to evaluating the current state of affairs (Int-T-7; Int-T-33; Int-T-38). In addition to the volatile environment Turkish foreign policy is embedded in, the nature of TIKA's expansion in recent years has raised concerns about the organisation's

direction and the sustainability of activities. For most officials I talked to, the lack of an explicit and comprehensive strategy for TIKA's engagement with partner countries was a major cause of concern. 'We just do things' was a recurring trope in interviews; and as one official put it:

> When you are assigned as coordinator to a new country, nobody tells you where to start, you just arrive and need to get your name out there; it is pretty easy to feel completely lost (Int-T-10).

So far, most measures supposed to address these institutional challenges either did not receive the endorsement of TIKA's leadership or have petered out. Initial plans to design sectoral and country strategies in the framework of a TIKA-UNDP capacity building programme, for instance, had first been protracted and then dropped altogether (Int-T-8; Int-T-33; Int-T-38; Int-N-43). The need to train human resources and hire country experts has been acknowledged, but so far little has changed (Int-T-3; Int-T-38). Questions of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessments have also not received major institutional attention. As one official put it:

> There is very little follow-up. We provide computers or construct [a] building or do [another] thing, and then we walk over to [the] next thing. … They call it Turkish Model. I'm not so sure. I don't know if anybody thinks all this through. Anything is possible, all the time. They tell us to jump. And we jump (Int-T-35).

While major decision-making processes have not been particularly transparent, officials repeatedly alluded to TIKA's position in Turkish power politics to make sense of its growing budget and rapid organisational expansion. Under the AKP, TIKA has been an increasingly important and powerful entity within the Turkish government; and TIKA leadership has been carefully chosen. One of TIKA's former Presidents, Hakan Fidan (2003-2007), is now the head of Turkey's national intelligence service and Serdar Çam, TIKA's President from 2011 to 2019, used to serve then-Prime Minister Erdoğan as Chief of Cabinet and has been said to be one of the President's closest AKP allies (Int-T-34; see Radikal 2015).[54] Personal links have thus ensured that since the beginning of AKP rule, key instructions for TIKA's engagement have usually come from the centre of political power, initially the Prime Minister's office and now the Presidential Palace (Int-T-31; Int-T-38). Turkish officials I interviewed – no matter if based

[54] As Deputy Minister, Çam ncurrently oversees TIKA, Yunus Emre Institutes and the Turks Abroad agency (TIKA 2019c).

at TIKA or elsewhere – argued that these links explained why any strategy document for TIKA's engagement abroad would be of little overall relevance.[55] As one official stated:

> Power politics is TIKA's strategy. Maybe more [so] than for others, because we are key for [Turkey's] image abroad. Sometimes I feel like we are all puppets in a bigger game; … as an organisation TIKA needs to make sure that it doesn't get messed up on the way (Int-T-9).

The main challenge for TIKA many officials pointed to has been the rapid growth of TIKA's network of geographical representation. With only a handful of officials permanently based abroad slightly more than a decade ago, TIKA currently operates 62 field offices on five continents and counts more than 150 countries in its list of recipients (TIKA 2019a; *see Annex 2.7*). For critical voices among Turkish officials, it is this rapid expansion together with the general lack of language-related or country expertise among staff as well as the poor strategic outlook and limited monitoring and evaluation practices that present serious organisational challenges (Int-T-37; Int-T-54). The following statement summarises the main worries expressed by TIKA officials: "We need to stop expanding. We are overheated. We need to consolidate, because otherwise things will [start to] fall apart" (Int-T-19). To take up the trope of the open-ended elevator, interview accounts suggest that most officials would rather press a lower-floor button than be stuck in a cabin controlled by the Presidential Palace. Their Neither/Nor confusion does not stem from being 'stuck half-way' but rather from the realization that they are on their way into unchartered territory, beyond 'South' or 'North' or anything else that could provide a meaningful reference framework.

# 3. A different kind of normal: beyond 'North' and 'South'

Notions of exceptionalism and exclusion tend to be accompanied by rather drastic experiences and strong feelings of superiority or loneliness. Beyond visible or painful extremes, however, there are also more gradual, tentative or moderate dimensions to Neither/Nor positionalities. In Veronica Wain's (2012, para 1) words, the experience of not fitting in with dominant categories can simply mean engaging in a quest for "a different kind

[55] TIKA eventually published its first Strategic Plan – developed without UNDP – in 2019 (TIKA 2019b).

of normal." With reference to multilateral circles, Mexican and Turkish diplomats repeatedly mentioned the 'G1' notion to refer to their somewhat peculiar positionalities, and a Turkish official stated:

> We have always been by ourselves. We are not a developing country, we are not Africa, we are not Asia. We are not a developed country either, we are not the US, we are not Europe. We are just ourselves, I guess (Int-T-48).

Whether being a G1 is judged as boon or bane, or both, varies among accounts. During interviews, Mexican mid-level diplomats in particular highlighted the potential for independent action associated with the absence of formal ties to rigid groupings in multilateral development circles. Most interviewees from both Mexico and Turkey, however, pointed to the ambiguities of being a G1. A Turkish official summarised it the following way:

> Nobody is like us. Sometimes that's cool. Most of the time it's … stressful. We do things differently. We do it our way. Sometimes it would be good to have others join us. … But we usually find our way (Int-T-18).

Mexico and Turkey's different and evolving steps towards 'finding their way' and creating space for their own 'normalities' come to the fore in more or less obvious ways. In the face of (potential) experiences of isolation and limbo, a range of different strategies and practices have come to accompany attempts to, in the words of a Mexican official, "reduce our G1-ness" (Int-M-5) by creating or contributing to schemes that offer notions of belonging across and beyond North/South lines.

As discussed in previous chapters, Mexico has helped to set up or joined a wide variety of regional and sub-regional schemes that, in one way or another, facilitate development cooperation initiatives or engage with multilateral development processes, from Proyecto Mesoamérica to UN coordination processes and the Ibero-American South-South cooperation programme. A more recent arrangement in the region, the Pacific Alliance, however, arguably epitomises Mexican attempts of forging alternative spaces of belonging. With Mexico, Chile, Colombia and Peru, the Pacific Alliance brings together – in Moises Naím's (2014, para 3) words – "the most successful economies in Latin America" and has received widespread praise for its quick and effective elimination of import tariffs and the promotion of economic integration (Marczak 2018; Held 2019; Erquicia 2019; Molano 2019). In terms of development-related programmes, the Pacific Alliance has put an explicit focus on cooperation among its member states, including the setup of a development cooperation fund (AGCI n.d.), joint initiatives on poverty reduction as well as academic scholarships, youth volunteer schemes

and the promotion of sustainable production and consumption (AdP 2019a; AdP 2019b). Mexico has also integrated Alliance member countries in its expanding triangular cooperation portfolio (GIZ 2017; AGCI 2017).

While all four member states face substantial socio-economic challenges, they are among the economically most prosperous countries in the region. Chile is classified as a high-income country and currently the OECD's only South American member. Colombia was officially invited to join the OECD in 2018 (OECD 2018d; OECD 2019l) and the Peruvian government has set itself the goal to get accepted as OECD member by the bicentenary of Peru's independence in 2021 (Romana 2018). With their eyes set 'North', so to say, the members of the Pacific Alliance are also embedded in the 'South' – Chile, Colombia and Peru as members of the G77 and Mexico, Colombia and Peru as countries on the DAC's list of ODA recipients (G77 2019; OECD 2019d; see CADEXCO 2014). While its explicitly regional outlook (AdP 2018, 5) embeds the Alliance in one of the tri-continental segments of the 'South' imaginary, references to 'South-South' have played a rather marginal role in its official rhetoric (AdP 2018, 5; Portafolio 2019). The positionality of the Pacific Alliance as a whole thus reflects some of Mexico's ambiguities, including notions of Either/Or approximation and a substantial amount of Both/And. Taken together, the Alliance is difficult to place with reference to the established poles of international development. Through an idiosyncratic mix of traditional 'North' and 'South' markers, it stands for a different kind of positionality that goes beyond the dominant imaginaries of belonging. It foregrounds a regional dimension where closeness to the OECD, G77 membership or occasional references to 'South-South' come to be treated as evolving segments of what a Mexican official referred to as "a joint quest for prosperity" (Int-M-30).

Contrary to Mexico's affinity with Latin America, Turkey lacks the immediate association with a major world region and has been at the margins of regional formations (Altunışık 2014; Herzog 2014). An attempt to counter that phenomenon and explore concrete alliances not only beyond the 'Western-Northern' world – where Turkey has struggled with the stigma of inferiority (Zarakol 2011) – but also beyond the broad and volatile framework of what is now called the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (Al-Ahsan 2019) was the creation of the cross-regional Economic Cooperation Organisation with Iran and Pakistan in 1985, as part of the opening-up of Turkey's external relations under Turgut Özal (ECO 2019). While the formal membership of the organisation has expanded over the years and now also includes a range of Central Asian countries (ECO 2019b), it has remained subject to the complex and evolving

relations between Turkey and Iran (Ebrahimi et al. 2017; see Larrabee and Nader 2013). A more substantial opportunity for the creation of regional structures presented itself with the independence of former Soviet Republics in the early 1990s. With reference to ethno-cultural ties, Turkey tried to create a framework of solidarity with its 'Turkic' sister nations (Robins 2014, 17f). While this attempt has been evaluated as only partially successful – arguably because of the reticence of Central Asian countries to be too closely associated with Turkish complexities (Robins 2014, 18) – it eventually led to the setup of the Turkic Council in 2009 (Turkic Council 2019; see Köstem 2017) and, more immediately, was closely connected to the creation of TIKA whose initial purpose had been to "develop strong collaborative ties especially in the Turkic Republics" (TIKA 2019d, para 2).

With and in parallel to TIKA's expanding engagement, collaboration on development-related issues has become an increasingly prominent tool for Turkish attempts to create lasting relations with other countries. As the brainchild of then Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (1996-1997), Developing-8 was another cross-regional initiative (created in 1997) as "an organisation for development cooperation" linking Turkey to the seven Muslim-majority countries Nigeria, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia (Developing-8 2019, para 1). The success of this attempt has been hampered, again, by the disparity of interests and a lack of political will by member state governments. While its headquarters have kept on operating from Istanbul, Developing-8 has, in the words of one of its senior staff members, "plunged into insignificance" (Int-IO-37). Another regional body headquartered in Istanbul, the organisation of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, has, since 1999, provided a cross-regional framework connecting countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe to Russia, Turkey and the Caucasus (BSEC 2019a). While the organisation has promoted collaboration across a considerable range of development-related areas (BSEC 2019b) it has remained susceptible to broader dynamics affecting member state relations (Bocutoğlu 2005), without the capacity to act as an "effective promoter of regionalization" (Hajizada and Marciacq 2013, 305). Over the decades, successive Turkish governments have thus tried – with varying and overall modest levels of success – to mobilise the potential of cultural, religious or geographical proximity to create organisations and collaboration platforms with the stated purpose of fostering development cooperation and, more generally, creating long-term alliances. More so than Mexico, Turkey has had to continuously explore different options of (re)framing international belonging across and beyond the imaginaries of 'North' and 'South.'

Beyond their respective (cross-)regional attempts of creating development-related alliance structures, the Mexican and Turkish governments have also jointly contributed to the creation of a 'minilateral' arrangement that traces its origin to the G20: the Mexico-Indonesia-Korea-Turkey-Australia (MIKTA) partnership (Cooper 2015a; Maihold 2016; Schiavon and Dominguez 2016; Kim et al. 2018). Led by reflections about how to boost their international positioning efforts, the proactive engagement of the Mexican and Turkish foreign ministers was arguably key for MIKTA's setup in 2013 (Maihold 2016; Kim et al. 2018). The result has been a grouping consisting of five members from different world regions with substantially different development realities and heterogeneous patterns of organizational membership. While Indonesia is a long-standing G77 member, all other MIKTA countries belong to the OECD. Only Australia and Korea, however, are part of the OECD-DAC while the other three MIKTA members are listed as ODA recipient countries (*see Annex 2.5*). As I have argued elsewhere (Haug 2017), this heterogeneous composition comes with major challenges for internal cohesion; but it also defies North/South divisions in a way that few other inter-governmental arrangements do. While MIKTA's claims to "play a bridging role between developed and developing countries" (MIKTA 2015, para 7) are reminiscent of Both/And notions of connection and facilitation, recent accounts suggest that the evolving agendas of its member states have limited MIKTA's outward-looking engagement, and that so far, its bridging potential for formal multilateral development processes (see Cooper 2015a; Haug 2017) has remained largely untapped. Instead, MIKTA has provided a "slender" (Kim et al. 2018, 486) ad-hoc consultation mechanism and a framework for one-off initiatives in different places, at different levels, and on different issues, offering space for low-key explorations among its five members across and beyond the developed/developing fault lines of formal alliance structures (Int-M-45; Int-T-47).

## Cooperation schemes beyond 'North' and 'South'

In addition to attempts of establishing alternative development-related alliances, Mexico and Turkey have set up concrete cooperation schemes that present more immediate challenges to international development binaries. While both countries have been part of vertical assistance schemes where they have been at the recipient or the provider end, or contributed as a pivotal country connecting both poles in state-of-the-art triangular arrangements, they

have not always followed typical engagement patterns. Turkey has implemented a meaningful range of triangular projects only with one 'traditional' donor – Japan (TIKA 2018a, 7; JICA 2018) – and has been exploring potential collaboration with the Korean development agency KOICA (Milliyet 2014; Kumar 2016; AA 2018b; AA 2018c). For TIKA, triangular cooperation with DAC donors has thus been the exception rather than the rule, and the Turkish government has shown no political interest in setting up substantial schemes for closer collaboration on the ground (Hausmann 2014; see TIKA 2016b, 21f).

Instead, trilateral cooperation formats with partners outside the DAC have become more prominent. Over the last years, the Turkish government has set up or joined an increasing number of rather informal inter-governmental schemes linking questions of security and development, notably with countries in its immediate neighbourhood – particularly in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans (see Balkan Insight 2011; Hafizoğlu 2017) – or countries further afield with Muslim-majority populations, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Malaysia (see PRC-ET 2010; Express Tribune 2010). The increasingly typical format brings together Turkey with two other countries (usually neighbours), such as the mostly political Turkey-Bosnia-Serbia mechanism (see Pavlovic 2016) or the Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan platform with a predominant focus on energy cooperation (see Shahbazov 2017). For Turkish officials, these ad hoc schemes and other small sub-regional or cross-regional cooperation platforms are an integral part of Turkey's engagement for supporting socio-economic development processes abroad (Int-T-17; Int-T-29). While often set up to serve specific political, cultural, economic or security-related purposes, most of these schemes include at least "a modest formal 'development' remit" (McEwan and Mawdsley 2012, 1190) that focuses on expanding tourism infrastructure, increasing cooperation on energy efficiency or supporting youth projects (see Hürriyet Daily News 2012; World Bulletin 2018; Ary News 2019). Other concrete collaboration schemes have included one-off initiatives such as TIKA's cooperation with the Singapore Cooperation Programme on joint training for meteorology experts from African countries (TIKA 2018a; TIKA 2018l; SCP 2018), the provision of emergency assistance to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh together with Kazakhstan, or a health initiative in Kenya in cooperation with medical personnel from Hungary (TIKA 2018m; Özkan Erbay 2018).

The expanding collaboration with Hungarian institutions, mostly through TIKA-led initiatives in Hungary proper (see Hürriyet Daily News 2018b), illustrates another feature of Turkey's development cooperation that goes against traditional expectations: Turkish assistance to

countries of similar income or 'development' levels.[56] While cultural and historical ties with Hungary have played a particularly visible role for joint cooperation projects there – such as the restoration of the tombs of Ottoman poet Gül Baba (TIKA 2018d; TIKA 2018n) and Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent who died in what is today the Hungarian town of Szigetvar (Cetin 2019)[57] – they are absent from relations with TIKA's partner countries outside the zone of former Ottoman influence, including South Africa, Colombia and Mexico. Irrespective of the fact that some of these partner countries have higher levels of GDP per capita – currently not only Hungary but also Croatia, Romania and Mexico (World Bank 2019h) – Turkey still engages as a 'donor' that follows up on engagement opportunities through TIKA's field offices (somewhat redefining what working in the 'field' means) and provides technical support or in-kind contributions. While commentators have called this provision pattern "ironic" (Fuchs and Vadlamannati 2012, 27), Turkey's increasing levels of development cooperation with other upper middle-income countries around the world – including those with higher GDP per capita levels – has become part of a 'new normal' where a range of otherwise atypical arrangements belong to an explicit strategy of expanding Turkey's economic and political networks.

Successive Mexican governments, in turn, have put an explicit emphasis on 'horizontal' schemes where Mexico is part of more "versatile" (Mawdsley 2019, 9) arrangements. This horizontality is arguably most visible in its cooperation with Uruguay and Chile briefly mentioned above (*see Chapter 3*). Set up in 2007 and 2009 respectively, the Chile-Mexico and Mexico-Uruguay Joint Funds provide a framework where both parties in equal parts contribute resources as well as decide about and implement initiatives and projects (AMEXCDI 2016; AUCI 2018). The Mexico-Uruguay fund receives half a million US dollars as a joint contribution from both governments on an annual basis (AUCI 2019), while the Chile-Mexico fund can count on a combined annual contribution of 2 million US dollars (AMEXCID 2016b). For both funds, the main focus of engagement has been directed at projects in the two contributing countries. Public bodies are invited on a regular basis to submit project proposals (AUCI 2019; AGCI 2019a); and the effective functioning of the Joint Funds relies to a large extent on the institutional capacity of their bureaucracies and their ability to mobilise networks and expertise. In addition to bilateral endeavours, the Chile-Mexico fund also contains a "triangular" (AGCI 2019b, para 3) element but defies the typical logic of pivotal

[56] On Turkey-Hungary relations, see also Chapter 6.
[57] On TIKA's focus on restoring Ottoman monuments in the Western Balkans, see Kocan and Arbeiter 2019.

countries connecting 'Northern' donors and 'Southern' recipients. Joint Chilean-Mexican endeavours have set up projects in third countries, from capacity building measures for avocado cultivation in Cuba to increasing the access to medicine in local health services in Haiti as well as regional initiatives in the Caribbean and Central America (AGCI 2019b).

As Latin American countries, Chile and Uruguay share a range of features with Mexico, including bureaucracies with levels of institutional capacity above the regional average (IADB 2019) as well as high-levels of overall inequality (World Bank 2019i); and while Chile and Uruguay's income-per-capita levels are considerably higher (World Bank 2019h), the size of the Mexican economy and Mexico's political weight mean that joint bilateral development cooperation initiatives allow for an eye-to-eye engagement absent from most other institutionalised collaboration schemes (Int-M-17; Int-M-19; Int-M-50). Both Joint Funds have thus not only incentivised collaboration between a range of institutions on both sides, assembled a long list of collaborative projects (121 for the Chile-Mexico fund alone) and mobilised what in relative terms can count as a considerable amount of financial resources (more than 25 million US dollars) but also provide insights into what a 'different kind of normal' can look like. While initiatives branded as 'triangular' under the Chile-Mexico fund usually involve third parties in Central America or the Caribbean with considerably lower levels of economic or institutional capacity and thus expose typical vertical cooperation dynamics, they go without the involvement of a DAC donor or the reliance on financial support by a multilateral agency. The bilateral engagement at the heart of both Joint Funds, in turn, is arguably as horizontal as it gets, with mutuality – in terms of both contributions and benefits – built into its institutional setup.

In different ways, certain Mexican and Turkish cooperation schemes thus upset and go beyond typical 'Southern' or 'Northern' engagement patterns. They provide evidence for triangular schemes set up without the financial support or substantial involvement of traditional donors or well-established multilateral agencies. They also suggest that bilateral schemes among countries of 'similar development levels' can actually reflect institutionalised notions of mutuality (as with Mexico's Joint Funds), or go against all traditional expectations by including examples of schemes where the (in per-capita terms) poorer country acts as 'donor' to the richer one (as with Turkey's engagement in Hungary and Croatia), turning the verticality of traditional development assistance logics upside down.

## Reporting practices beyond 'North' and 'South'

Not only alliance structures and collaboration modalities, but also the more technical ways in which development cooperation is reported provide insights into how Mexico and Turkey have gone beyond established templates and frameworks. As discussed in Chapter 3, Turkey has formally embraced ODA but, contrary to DAC countries, does not report development cooperation at the activity level (Int-T-4; Int-IO-46; see OECD 2017c). This has made it impossible for the OECD to monitor specific expenses and evaluate to what extent Turkey provides data in accordance with current DAC standards, with available evidence suggesting that large parts of Turkey's 'in-donor' humanitarian assistance (and thus the vast majority of reported expenses) would not count as ODA if DAC standards were applied. The authors of the Global Humanitarian Assistance reports – published annually by the British NGO Development Initiatives – are among the few to have taken these insights to heart by highlighting Turkey's *sui generis* characteristics in their provider comparisons and excluding Turkish ODA data from their calculation of total global expenditures for humanitarian assistance (Development Initiatives 2016; 2019). The Turkish government, however, has used its OECD-endorsed but rather opaque ODA figures and Development Initiative rankings – cleared of all explanations and references highlighting the non-comparability of Turkish data – to showcase Turkey's exceptional standing as a generous caretaker for the world's 'downtrodden' and its moral superiority towards traditional donors (TIKA 2017a; *see Annex 6.1*).

The point here is not to argue whether or not this use of numbers is legitimate, but to highlight that the Turkish government has managed to use existing standards for its own purposes. While this contains approximation dynamics – with Turkish ODA 'sort of' or 'not really' in line with DAC guidelines (*see Chapter 3*) – it also points to the Neither/Nor potential of subverting and transcending established frameworks through *de facto* practices. By and large, the celebration of superiority and claims about being the world's shelter and conscience in official Turkish accounts build on reporting practices that differ not only from those of major 'Southern' providers (that have refused to adopt ODA and have not come up with an alternative collective standard, *see Chapter 6*) and tentative monitoring guidelines for recipients developed by the GPEDC (GPEDC 2019b), but also from how DAC donors usually operationalise ODA. By adapting the meaning of ODA to Turkish circumstances, the Turkish government has effectively carved out a space inside yet somewhat at the margins of (or even

slightly outside) the ODA regime that it can employ for strategic purposes. Irrespective of footnotes and clarifications in NGO reports (Development Initiatives 2016, 17f) or notes of caution expressed by OECD and TIKA officials (Int-IO-46; Int-T-4), the Turkish government has been quite successful with a rather creative take on ODA aligned with Turkish requirements. It has been able to create space for the subversive use of established tools and produce internationally endorsed evidence that highlights Turkey's standing as a key provider, stronger than the 'South' and more generous than the 'North'.

The Mexican government, in turn, has been more explicit in exploring alternative ways of quantifying its contribution to international development. Contrary to Turkey, Mexico has turned its back on ODA as the gold standard for development cooperation reporting. Mexican representatives have repeatedly highlighted the need for devising alternative methodologies that better reflect the realities of providers outside the DAC (Int-M-14; see Fox 2002; Bracho 2015, 10f), including the challenge of quantifying assistance practices that are difficult to measure numerically, such as technical expertise or regional coordination support (Int-M-6; Int-M-19). Bruno Figueroa (2017, 241), the former Director-General for Proyecto Mesoamérica at AMEXCID, for instance, has argued that a significant part of Mexico's assistance to Central America has been

> silent cooperation, permanent and invisible, but whole economic sectors depend on it, as … in the case of the campaign against the Mediterranean Fruit Fly, the control of which enables annual exports worth billions of US dollars.

Acknowledging the need to present numbers in order to counter at least parts of that 'silence', AMEXCID began to explore the possibility of designing its *own* framework for quantifying outgoing flows. Like TIKA, AMEXCID has not publicly shared activity-level data but provides information on the basis of aggregated numbers and general project overviews (Int-M-22; see SEGIB 2018). Detailed insights into the 'hard facts' of individual cooperation projects – money spent, individuals involved, output and impact generated – are mostly missing.

Instead, and based on data collected through its development cooperation register, AMEXCID has reported Mexico's annual figures under five broad categories, namely humanitarian assistance, scholarships, contributions to international organisations, financial cooperation and technical cooperation (AMEXCID 2018m; AMEXCID 2018n). The calculation of technical cooperation expenditure in particular required a rethinking of existing practices in order to see resource-light assistance reflected in quantitative overviews. After exploring different

options (Int-M-17; Int-M-22), AMEXCID developed a basic formula for calculating the monetary value as the "opportunity cost" of sending Mexican government officials to partner countries for technical cooperation initiatives (AMEXCID 2016c, 5). Another feature of AMEXCID's quantification exercise has been the insistence that in order to set up a meaningful comparison between Mexico and other providers, expenditures need to be adjusted to Purchasing Power Parity (Callen 2007) in order to account for the fact that a US dollar in the Mexican context is worth considerably more than in, say, Norway, and that the failure of taking that into account can substantially underestimate the potential leverage of providers outside the DAC (AMEXCID 2018n, para 4). Irrespective of the (in relative terms) rather modest figures that AMEXCID has reported so far (*see Annex 3.3.2*), its quantification methodology has thus informed the development of an alternative reporting approach that tries to account for the particularities of the Mexican context and of Mexican cooperation schemes. Instead of reporting in line with existing DAC or GPEDC standards, AMEXCID has relied on its own methodology as well as alternative reporting formats that adapt externally set guidelines to Mexican circumstances (see AMEXCID 2016c; AMEXCID 2018n).

In different ways, the reporting frameworks and practices of both Mexico and Turkey thus go beyond 'Southern providers' rejection of international reporting standards, DAC-set ODA guidelines or GPEDC attempts to mainstream reporting practices. With implicit and explicit reference to their Neither/Nor positionalities, both Mexico and Turkey have made idiosyncratic and creative use of existing instruments and templates and, by doing so, have developed specific 'Turkish' and 'Mexican' ways of doing development cooperation reporting. More generally, Mexican and Turkish engagement patterns reflect dynamics that put them apart from established North/South imaginaries and widespread expectations of multilateral positionalities and alliance structures, and of how development cooperation is supposed to be set up, implemented and reported on.

# 4. Neither/Nor as Thirding

Exceptionalism-cum-superiority, experiences of isolation and ontological limbo, as well as attempts of identifying a different kind of normal, all capture dynamics somewhat beyond North/South. The term 'beyond' refers to phenomena at the further side of a given situation or category (Oxford Dictionary 2019i) that are out of reach (Merriam Webster 2019i) or contain a different set of elements; and it is also used to describe things one is unable to deal with (Collins 2019g). The extraordinary positionality of the 'world's conscience', experiences of being stuck half-way as well as alternative cooperation schemes or reporting practices are 'out of reach' for the traditional frames of international development. The 'beyond' points to dynamics and phenomena that a North/South lens is unable to make sense of. It is an inherent part of all Thirding attempts discussed so far. Both approximations of binary poles (*see Chapter 3*) and claims to simultaneous belonging (*see Chapter 4*) inherently contain the notion of going beyond the assumed neatness of 'North' and 'South' imaginaries. The logic of Neither/Nor, however, arguably *centres* on the beyond: more forcefully than the approximation of Either/Or and more radically than Both/And, it pushes for space outside the elements provided by established binaries. In Homi Bhabha's (1994, para 2; Soja 1996, 143) words cited above (*see Chapter 2*), "there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond'"; and it is this disorientating feature of Neither/Nor that points to "those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of … differences."

Going back to the initial discussion of exceptionalism in the first section of this chapter, the evolution of official Turkish identity narratives provides a particularly telling example for how this 'articulation of differences' unfolds. From the plot of emergence in the 2000s that narrated Turkey's transition from recipient to donor (*see Chapter 3*), recent official accounts present a rather different approach that, in previously unheard-of ways, tries to open up new spaces for defining Turkish roles and positionalities. The Neither/Nor of Ottoman-inspired notions of exceptionalism can be read, following Berenskoetter (2014, 273), as an innovative take on questions of positionality, that similar to Mexico's focus on duality (*see Chapter 4*) contains a "creative element which enables the Self to unfold into the 'not-yet'". For Turkey, this 'not yet' of recent official accounts is the aspiration to 21st-century greatness, connected to ideas about pre-20th century Ottoman exceptionalism. It is in this creative step that Turkey's

current narrative approach also has a deep conservative leaning: it emphasises long-term continuity, clings to particular notions of historical traditions and carries this – partial and stylised – legacy into present and future. Unlike the dominant strand of official Mexican narratives, the main thrust of recent Turkish accounts does not build on the duality or bridging functions of Both/And but defines Turkey's positionality as being far away from both poles, "neither here nor there" (Turner 1969, 95).

By and large, Turkey is presented as a self that leaves stereotypical notions behind to become not just something different but something exceptional – the most generous country, the world's shelter, the world's conscience, a humanitarian superhero. According to Chris Gavaler (2014, 108; see Coogan 2003; Dittmer 2012), "[s]uperhero narratives … are especially dependent on … imperial representations and divisions" where the superhero's reliance on his – less frequently her or their – "unparalleled powers" used to fight for the ones he cares for "mirrors empire's claim as a rightfully dominating global power." With reference to Ottoman legacies, Turkish accounts chart the space beyond, far away from both poles, as a "realm of social possibility" (Rumelili 2012, 502). Positioned at the 'heart of the earth', the world is Turkey's turf; and Turkey-as-superhero has a responsibility towards humankind as a whole. Far away from standard positions, the image of Turkey presented in official accounts can appear "both alluring and endangering" (Mälksoo 2012, 489). While official accounts make sure to highlight Turkey's prompt and efficient support for those in need, the ways in which support is provided seem to rely exclusively on Turkey's 'ideas', 'hearts' and 'hands'. As the world's shelter and conscience, Turkey is assigned capacities reminiscent of paternalistic "super-empowered" (Costello and Worcester 2014, 85) figures in ancient myths or comic book editions. Turkey – the masculinist super-donor, so to say[58] – is said to follow in the steps of the glorious days of Ottoman rulers, leaving behind not only 'Northern' donors that are described as following biased and outdated ways of doing development cooperation (Çam 2017; see TIKA 2018m) but also 'Southern' recipients that in their neediness can only acknowledge that through Turkey's exceptional support, "the world has changed" (TIKA 2018a, 01:25).

Irrespective of how these narratives are received by different audiences, they put forward attempts of transcending existing templates. While references to dominant binaries are still

[58] For a gender-lens analysis of Turkish foreign policy with an explicit focus on masculinities, see Bilgic 2016.

part of the ways in which positionalities are defined, it is the difference to and distance towards 'North' and 'South' that take centre stage. Turkish exceptionalism and 'super-donor' narratives may interpret this difference as superiority, but the accounts of Mexican and Turkish officials discussed above highlight how closely Neither/Nor excitement can be associated with isolation and constant limbo. Experiences and positionalities outside the space defined by dominant binaries can create fear, annoyance or confusion, including for those parts of Turkey's audiences that do not buy into 'super-donor' narratives, or Turkish officials themselves who face loneliness in multilateral negotiations and are overwhelmed by the speed with which TIKA's operations have expanded.

As this chapter has shown, Mexican and Turkish engagement patterns are not only a Both/And call for combination and synthesis but also highlight the need to acknowledge positionalities that fall out of the spaces whose contours are defined by established categories. Irrespective of their longevity or success, arrangements like the Pacific Alliance, MIKTA or Mexican and Turkish reporting schemes illustrate that an increasing number of phenomena central to Mexico and Turkey's engagement with international development are difficult to grasp through North/South lenses. In many ways, the empirical processes discussed in this chapter defy the logic of traditional binaries and, taken together, underline the *sui generis* features of an increasing range of alliances, narratives and experiences that unfold outside or irrespective of 'North' and 'South'. Traditional parameters lose traction, (begin to) disappear and make space for other – more glorious, more chaotic or simply different – ways of engaging with questions of cooperation and development.

Taken together, the 'unnameable' (Thompson 2018) or 'deviant' (Love 2015) features of Mexican and Turkish engagement patterns and positionalities thus carry some tangible emancipatory potential. Emancipation is usually thought to contain a critical stance towards that which is, associated with processes of or struggles for change where limitations and restrictions are left behind in order to embrace alternative ways of defining one's place in the world (see Brandt 2019). Irrespective of the normative evaluation of what the Mexican and Turkish governments do – whether or to what extent their claims and assistance practices are seen as helpful, too limited or dangerous, for instance – an emancipatory dimension of their engagement unfolds with reference to the evolving *status quo* of North/South (*see Chapter 1*). Following Nancy Fraser (2008, 4) in that "[e]mancipation is not an 'all or nothing' affair," establishing distance from previously dominant structures is often an incremental process and

requires a focus on the specific context in which positionalities unfold. As Hendrik Hartog (2016) has emphasised, Neither/Nor is an inherent part of these gradual emancipation processes, where well-established categories and templates are incrementally left behind, creating a whole range of alternative positionalities, opportunities and challenges that can be difficult to pinpoint.

Going back to the initial conceptual reflections on the close links between Thirding and queering (*see Chapter 2*), insights from the often detailed and nuanced discussions over sexuality and gender that are frequently brushed aside as ridiculous or superfluous (Hardy 2015; Bell 2016; Curto 2019; Delaney 2019) can actually act as a reference and inspiration for developing a sensibility towards the wide range of potential positionalities and types of engagement that inter-governmental constellations in international development have on offer. The various Neither/Nor dimensions of Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns – including constellations of horizontality or reverse verticality – unfold with a more or less explicit emphasis on distance and difference vis-à-vis dominant poles (see Barker and Iantaffi 2019). Mexican and Turkish experiences currently contribute to unsettling and transcending the international development binaries of developed/developing or donor/recipient. They draw attention to dynamics that not only have tended to go unnoticed but also contain valuable insights for reflections on country positionalities as well as the current state of affairs, and possibly the future of the field of international development politics. This is what I turn to in the next – and final – chapter.

# Chapter 6.

# The Thirding Lens and international development politics

Against the backdrop of North/South, how have Mexico and Turkey been positioned in and engaged with international development politics? More generally, what do Mexican and Turkish experiences suggest for approaching and making sense of phenomena at odds with dominant binaries? After a detailed engagement with empirical realities through the three-legged Thirding Lens, I now turn the focus back on this dissertation's overarching research interest. In order to take stock, I provide a condensed account of what previous chapters have suggested in terms of Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns (section 1) as well as the conceptual contours and specificities of the Thirding Lens (section 2). I then draw on central Thirding notions – Either/Or approximation, Both/And simultaneity and Neither/Nor emancipation – to go beyond Mexico and Turkey and provide a broader analysis of country positionalities and engagement patterns (section 3). Based on that I reflect on the liminal phase of international development politics and suggest that irrespective of the ongoing dilution of the North/South divide, the Thirding Lens is set to remain a relevant tool for making sense of social realities in international development and beyond (section 4).

## 1. Mexico and Turkey: both, between and beyond

Building on the combined insights from Mexico and Turkey gathered through the Thirding Lens, in this section I focus on each case in turn to provide a summary of how positionalities and engagement patterns have unfolded. When trying to flesh out what the analysis of complex social realities has led to, there is often a more or less conscious urge to boil findings

down into the form of, ideally, a neat mechanism or catchy label that sums up the gist of empirical cases. As Bent Flyvbjerg (2006, 239) has argued, however, what may be lost with this kind of summarising is "the possibility to understand virtuoso social acting that … cannot be distilled into theoretical formulae." With this in mind, I provide accounts of Mexican and Turkish realities in international development that, while condensed, bring together the key entanglements discussed in previous chapters.

## Mexico

From a historical perspective on the evolution of organisational membership patterns in international development politics, Mexico can be said to have moved towards the 'North'. As a former 'Third World' champion, the Mexican government made what many perceived as a 180-degree turn when it joined the OECD in 1994. As the first country to effectively leave the G77, Mexico was at the forefront of some of the incremental shifts that international development has experienced over the last decades. OECD membership provided a new backdrop for Mexico's evolving engagement – building on earlier attempts such as the 1981 North-South Summit in Cancún – to bring 'developing' and 'developed' worlds together, most notably through the 2002 Monterrey conference on Financing for Development (FfD). OECD membership was also an important conditioning factor for the institutionalization of Mexico's official engagement with international development cooperation, particularly through the 2011 International Development Cooperation Act and the setup of AMEXCID. Ever since, Mexico has been a close OECD ally on development-related issues, as an observer of DAC peer-review processes and a strong voice on development policy questions, such as development effectiveness at the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).

At the same time, however, recent years have seen a subtle change in official rhetoric that refers to Mexico no longer as 'donor' but as 'provider', reflecting a more general trend in the field and suggesting that OECD notions of donorship are less of a reference than a decade or so ago. Also, Mexican realities as measured through mainstream development indices – from income to education levels and life expectancy – suggest that, despite OECD membership, Mexico is not in line with what is currently understood to be a 'developed' country. Beyond questions of classification, material challenges have had a palpable impact on Mexico's engagement with international development processes, from budgetary limitations to

discussions about the suitability of Mexico as a model for others. This is part of a set of dynamics suggesting that Mexico has all along remained part of – or has even been moving back towards – the 'South', while the meanings attached to the 'South' itself have been evolving. In line with traditional frames, from development indices to the DAC list of ODA recipients, there is ample evidence for classifying Mexico as a 'developing' country. In multilateral development spaces – and despite renouncing G77 membership – Mexico has maintained its affinity with developing country causes and, most notably, regional groupings. Mexico's Latin American identity has gone largely unquestioned. The Mexican government has been an active voice in and contributor to regional 'South-South' spaces, in terms of both concrete cooperation initiatives and regional coordination schemes through ECLAC or SEGIB. In line with other Latin American governments, Mexican representatives have also repeatedly argued for a review of ODA graduation rules, highlighting Mexico's continuing interest in being a 'recipient' and the general importance of incoming assistance for upper middle-income countries.

On top of that, references to 'South-South' have become an increasingly central component of official Mexican accounts, in line with the rising popularity of 'South' terminology since the 2000s. The explicit focus on horizontality and the move towards 'provider' terminology bring Mexican rhetoric closer to the vocabulary used by 'Southern' players outside the OECD. The relatively narrow way in which the Mexican government defines 'South-South', however – explicitly highlighting the mutuality of cooperation schemes – *de facto* excludes cooperation with Central America and the Caribbean and thus a considerable (i.e. the main) part of Mexico's development cooperation from the 'South-South' umbrella. What is more, not only external observers but also Mexican officials themselves have struggled with North/South assignations, repeatedly falling back on 'sort of' notions when trying to capture their complex patterns of belonging.

Against the backdrop of this ambiguity, successive Mexican governments have defied the mutual exclusivity of North/South by claiming to belong to, combine elements from or connect both 'North' and 'South'. Since the 1950s, the simultaneity of receiving and providing has been a key trope in Mexican rhetoric. Throughout consecutive national development plans, legal frameworks and the very logo of AMEXCID, it has provided a rationale for official narratives which is both robust and flexible. Over the last years, the notion of duality has become a neat and popular formula to capture Mexico's commitment to both receiving and

providing assistance. Together with an emphasis on Mexico's multiple belongings, the Mexican government has presented itself as a connector and broker in international fora. For a range of major DAC donors, Mexico has become a 'strategic recipient': as an increasingly important player in the Americas and a fellow OECD member, Mexico has been identified as a partner of choice for investing in future development partnerships. Several DAC donors have tried to expand their leverage in and with Mexico, not only by increasing their bilateral ODA but also through expanding their direct collaboration with AMEXCID. Relatedly, Mexico has become one of the most visible pivotal countries in triangular cooperation schemes. The Mexican government has endorsed 'hinge' functions to collaborate with DAC donors in the provision of technical assistance in recipient countries, mostly in Central America, and has led multilateral policy discussions on triangular cooperation at the OECD and the GPEDC.

The Mexican government has also been eager to take on facilitating functions in multilateral settings, from formal negotiations at the UN General Assembly to more informal settings such as Groups of Friends. Mexico has been a popular host for development-related events and has invested political and financial resources to champion specific causes at regional and global levels, from 'South-South' cooperation to Agenda 2030, FfD and the GPEDC. The latter two, in particular, have shaped Mexico's more recent engagement, with international development audiences highlighting the diligence of Mexican diplomats, their readiness to engage as well as their proximity to both 'North' and 'South' as key factors for the country's added value in multilateral fora. Mexican officials and their bilateral and multilateral partners tend to present Mexico's take on facilitation and championing processes in a positive light.

Critics, however, have challenged the relevance of multilateral coordination efforts as well as one-off exchanges, workshops or study tours that so far have been at the heart of Mexico's development cooperation. Central American voices in particular have deplored Mexico's lack of substantial engagement. Mexico's focus on multilateral facilitating and championing processes has been perceived as a waste of time and energy, where an over-commitment to superficial attempts to be 'everywhere with everyone' has come at the expense of seriously needed engagement with development-related questions on the ground. What is perceived as a lack of concrete results combined with 'class rep' or 'stage hog' allures paint the image of Mexico as a collective entity seeking constant but superficial validation. Mexican officials, in turn, struggle with 'collective schizophrenia' and the overstretch of trying to be on all fronts

at the same time, contributing to an overall picture where confusion and superficial claims to relevance can forfeit the persuasiveness of Mexico as successful connector.

This points to some of the ways in which Mexico has kept distance from or has gone beyond the spaces defined by 'North' and 'South'. At odds with both 'Northern' donor and 'Southern' recipient imaginaries, Mexican officials have struggled with feelings of loneliness and confusion, particularly with regard to their government's incapacity to deal with key domestic development issues and the challenge this poses to Mexico's standing as provider. Financially, strategically and institutionally AMEXCID has gone through cycles of limbo, further underlining the lack of a template and reference point for defining how officials are supposed to enact Mexican engagement. From their perspective, the absence of a box that Mexico fits in conditions Mexican broad multilateral engagement strategies as a response to the fear of multilateral isolation. Feelings of superiority have been limited to Mexico's agility to engage with multilateral processes without the need to coordinate action with the G77, or what some – particularly among DAC donors – perceive as Mexico's unparalleled combination of institutional capacity and geographical-cultural proximity in its cooperation with Central America.

Beyond spaces and alliance structures that are clearly aligned with 'North' or 'South', the Mexican government has put an increasing emphasis on its engagement with the Pacific Alliance that – with Chile, Colombia and Peru – brings together some of the most 'North'-leaning countries in the region, reflecting Mexico's own idiosyncratic mix of closeness to the OECD, 'South-South' engagement and a strong notion of Latin American belonging. In terms of concrete cooperation schemes, Mexico's Joint Funds with Chile and Uruguay also reflect this collaboration with countries that are at odds with clear developed/developing assignations and share similar development challenges. These Funds arguably exemplify the horizontality that official Mexican accounts expect from 'South-South' schemes; and they offer a tool to engage in a different kind of trilateral initiatives that do not require 'Northern' support. Mexico's development cooperation reporting practices have also moved beyond traditional templates. Contrary to most 'Southern' providers, AMEXCID is in favour of shared reporting standards and transparent methodologies; but instead of abiding by existing donor (DAC) or recipient (GPEDC) reporting guidelines, it has come up with an alternative quantification model adapted to Mexican circumstances.

Overall, the evidence discussed in previous chapters shows that both 'Northern' and 'Southern' assignations fall short of capturing Mexican positionalities and engagement patterns with international development politics. So do analyses that exclusively frame Mexico as "emerging donor" (Lätt 2011; White 2011; Mueller 2013) or a "bridge" (Prado Lallande 2015; see González and Pellicer 2013; Pellicer 2013; Garza et al. 2016). Expanding portfolios and facilitating attempts are only partial aspects of what Mexico's engagement with international development over the last couple of decades has been about. And while combining and connecting functions have been key for recent official identity narratives and engagement strategies, bridge labels do not capture the experiences of overstretch, limbo and isolation as well as the more defiant-subversive or alternative-independent aspects of Mexican engagement.

## Turkey

Earlier than Mexico, Turkey was set to move closer to the 'North'. With an explicit orientation towards Europe and the US during the first decades of its existence, the Republic of Turkey not only joined NATO in 1952 but was also a founding member of the OECD in 1960 and, for electoral purposes, has been part of the Western Europe and Others regional grouping at the UN. The OECD has been a key reference for Turkey as recipient and – since 1990 – also as provider of ODA. The setup of TIKA as official development agency in charge of ODA in 1992 – then mainly as a tool to reach out to post-Soviet spaces – coincided with Turkey's insistence that it be listed as a 'developed country' under the Kyoto Protocol. Since the creation of the DAC (also in 1960), Turkey has been an observer, and the first to join a DAC peer-review process in 2005. With the expansion of Turkish ODA in the early 2000s, the Turkish government adopted large parts of the DAC-aligned donorship framework, including the 0.7 percent ODA performance target. With DAC donors as models and reference, Turkey was presented as a 'leading emerging donor' and first-row aspirant to full donorship following a textbook emergence from recipient to donor status.

Upon closer inspection, however, Turkey's alignment with ODA standards has been partial. Large parts of assistance volumes that the Turkish government reports to the OECD are financial resources that remain within the Turkish economy and would, if strict DAC standards were applied, not count as ODA. While highlighting the DAC and its standards as a guiding

reference, official Turkish account have always made clear that Turkey's assistance practices differ from those of DAC member countries, notably due to the many characteristics that separate Turkey from 'developed' countries. This points to some of the ways in which Turkey can be and has been said to be part of or closely connected to the 'South'. Currently classified as an upper middle-income country, Turkey faces pronounced subnational development disparities. Like Mexico, Turkey has not only remained on the official DAC recipient list but, over the last years, has also received more ODA than ever before. Multilaterally, Turkey sent representatives to the 1955 Bandung conference and was largely seen as a post-war 'developing' country. While alignment with 'Northern' allies remained a primary concern, liberalisation policies in the 1980s provided the backdrop for a more proactive engagement with different parts of the 'developing world', particularly in its neighbourhood. Since the early 2000s, development-related engagement with spaces beyond the EU has increased significantly under successive AKP governments, with TIKA playing an increasingly visible role in expanding ties with countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Turkish government has also taken on a leading role in promoting the cause of LDCs, notably by expanding its bilateral cooperation portfolios, organising conferences and, since 2018, hosting the UN Technology Bank for LDCs.

While Turkey has been counted by some as part of a group of increasingly vocal 'Southern' powers, it has always had a somewhat uneasy relationship with the 'South', including connotations of the 'post-colonial' world. As the 'successor state' of the Ottoman Empire and in the context of its explicit alignment with the post-war 'North', Turkey did not join the G77 and kept its distance from North/South debates in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Rhetorically, references to the 'South' and 'South-South' relations have also not played a prominent role in official Turkish accounts. The same goes for Turkey's 'developing country' status that, if at all, is used either as a reference to past realities in order to highlight Turkey's economic and geopolitical 'emergence' or to make the case for Turkey's legitimate interest in accessing specific international cooperation funds, thereby reflecting tensions in how different parts of the Turkish bureaucracy tend to frame Turkey's international standing with regard to development-related concerns. The ambiguity of Turkey's position as 'not really' being a 'developing country' has also been felt at the multilateral level where G77 countries have challenged Turkey's interest in benefitting from climate change support schemes. For Turkish officials themselves, it is largely unclear whether or to what extent Turkey should be seen as

part of the 'South' or the 'developing world'. In their day-to-day activities, they tend to use references to 'South-South' as a jargon that corresponds to what other stakeholders say and are thought to expect.

Against this backdrop of evolving and ambiguous positionalities, the possibility of simultaneously belonging to and thus defying the mutual exclusivity of North/South has been a recurring theme. At the UN, Turkey is the only country that officially belongs to two regional groupings – not only to the Western Europe and Others but also to the Asia-Pacific group. It has also been among the very few countries that both provide and receive assistance formally reported as ODA, with providing/receiving ratios fluctuating considerably over time. References to duality and bridge functions have, overall, been less prominent for Turkey than for Mexico; but Turkey's connecting functions somewhat reflect Mexican patterns. As another 'strategic recipient' for DAC donors, Turkey has received increasing levels of ODA since the mid-2000s when the Turkish government embarked on formal accession negotiations with the EU. Preceding the *de facto* halt of negotiations since 2016, one rationale for the EU to contemplate Turkey's membership in the first place and provide pre-accession funding had been the view that investing in relations with Turkey was part of a long-term strategy to expand and deepen links with the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East.

The potential of Turkey's connecting functions has also found a concrete expression in triangular cooperation schemes: similar to Mexico, Turkey has collaborated as 'hinge' with multilateral agencies to provide support to third countries through in-kind contributions, training programmes or study tours. In terms of bilateral assistance, official Turkish accounts as well as a range of recipients and observers highlight Turkey's popular combination of humanitarian assistance with infrastructure development and private sector engagement that responds particularly well to recipient demand. It is the combination of a recipient country trajectory with an expanding track record as an increasingly visible provider – bringing together 'Southern' legitimacy and 'Northern' capacity – that has made Turkey an attractive partner, also in terms of multilateral processes. Turkey's support for LDCs and its expanding engagement with UNDP have been based on that rhetorical rationale; and the championing of the humanitarian assistance agenda has also been traced back to Turkey's position at the crossroads between 'developing' and 'developed' worlds. As country of origin, host, transit space for migration processes and co-organiser of the first World Humanitarian Summit, Turkey has tried to solidify its claims to international leadership.

The evaluation of Turkish engagement has been hampered, however, by the impression – particularly among multilateral audiences – that Turkey has used development fora more than other countries to advance national interests. There have also been allegations inside and outside Turkey that its development cooperation is not only a tool for badly concealed geopolitical and geo-economic power politics but also suffers from dubious procurement procedures, the absence of impact assessments and a lack of oversight that all undermine TIKA's legitimacy. While Turkey thus shares challenges that both 'Northern' donors and 'Southern' providers face, it has often been singled out as a particularly complex and problematic player. Even though European donors in particular have been relieved by Turkey's *de facto* readiness to act as a buffer or bulwark in migratory questions (incentivised by rising bilateral ODA levels as support for the hosting of refugees), the Turkish government's plans to use Syrian nationals for setting up their own buffer zone in the north of Syria has put a more controversial light on what had generally been perceived as Turkey's considerable generosity.

In addition, a wide variety of conspiracy theories and stories about Turkey's imminent disintegration circulate among audiences in Turkey and abroad and provide the backdrop against which Turkish engagement with development-related processes unfolds in international circles. Multilateral backing for Turkish initiatives has been on the decline, and with the deteriorating security situation in Turkey, Istanbul has lost some of its previous attraction as destination for international gatherings and the relocation of multilateral offices. This coincides with a trend at the UN General Assembly where Turkey has made a name for itself as abstainer at the margins from controversial development-related resolutions. Outside established groupings, Turkish diplomats at the UN have expressed feelings of isolation and loneliness, reflected in the impression by large parts of multilateral audiences that Turkey is not a particularly proactive player in day-to-day multilateral development processes. For TIKA officials, in turn, the expansion of Turkey's engagement with development and humanitarian questions on the ground has led to confusion about how to define their collective take on donorship. TIKA's close links to Turkish power politics have raised concerns about the organisation's direction and the sustainability of activities. By and large, Turkish officials feel they are on their way into unchartered territory, beyond 'South' or 'North' or anything else that could provide a meaningful reference framework.

The most explicit way in which the Turkish government has underlined its distance to established templates, however, has been its recurring references to neo-Ottoman

exceptionalism. Official accounts draw explicit and direct lines between a certain reading of the Ottoman Empire as the world's 'shelter' or 'conscience' and the AKP-led expansion of Turkish engagement since the early 2000s. Based on ODA comparisons, the celebration of Turkey's generosity also explicitly highlights that Turkish engagement – through the 'Turkish-Style Development Model' – is inherently superior to traditional DAC donor approaches. As the world's 'most generous donor', Turkey is presented as a self-confident leader that – allegedly unhampered by its imperial legacy – takes care of those in need. With considerable distance from both weak 'South' and corrupted 'North', Turkey is thus presented as a super-donor moving towards 21st-century greatness, somewhat at odds with the fear, annoyance, limbo and confusion experienced by Turkish officials.

Beyond prominent claims and hidden contradictions, different parts of Turkish engagement have also contributed to exploring schemes and practices that reflect a 'normality' different from that of traditional international development schemes. With varying levels of success, Turkey has tried to mobilise the potential of cultural, religious or geographical proximity to create institutionalised frameworks intended to expand and deepen Turkey's ties of regional or multilateral belonging across and beyond 'North' and 'South'. Also, trilateral cooperation formats with DAC donors have been the exception rather than the rule, and Turkey has instead explored and institutionalised schemes with an increasing number of partners outside the DAC. In terms of bilateral relations, Turkey has expanded its assistance to countries of similar or higher income levels, including EU member states. These otherwise atypical arrangements belong to an explicit strategy of expanding Turkey's economic and political networks and are part of a 'new normal' where the traditional distinction between 'rich(er) donor' and 'poor(er) recipient' does not hold anymore. In a similar line, Turkey's partial take on ODA reporting guidelines contributes to *de facto* subverting a key reference in the field of international development. Through its idiosyncratic approach to ODA, the Turkish government has managed to present internationally endorsed evidence that highlights Turkey's standing as a key provider, stronger than the 'South' and more generous than the 'North'.

## Both, between and beyond

As highlighted from the outset and throughout previous chapters, Mexican and Turkish positionalities and engagement patterns in international development politics have, in many

ways, differed significantly. Beyond their diverging historical trajectories vis-à-vis North/South divisions and regional spaces, their multilateral presence and their development cooperation have been characterized by different emphases and diverging trends, with Mexico keeping a mostly regional focus and Turkey investing in an increasingly global presence. This has also been visible in the – overall limited – bilateral development cooperation between the two countries themselves. The establishment of a TIKA office in Mexico City carries a notion of one-sided assistance – Turkey provides while Mexico receives – in a context where, at least in GDP per capita terms, Mexico is slightly 'richer' than Turkey. This is part of what I have referred to as sets of Neither/Nor normalities that unfold beyond questions of North' and 'South'. For Mexico and Turkey, the first steps of these alternative cooperation realities are embedded in an otherwise rather horizontal back and forth between governments of two upper middle-income countries that not only face domestic development challenges but also enjoy significant leverage at regional and global levels. At the 'minilateral' level, the most visible expression of that logic has been the setup of MIKTA. As argued above, while MIKTA's success so far can be summarised as rather modest, its very composition provides a challenge to North/South logics by bringing together countries that, according to organizational membership patterns, are part of the DAC-North (Australia, South Korea), the G77-South (Indonesia) and the in-between of OECD-but-not-DAC (Mexico, Turkey).

With reference to existing conceptualisations and labels, particular aspects of Mexican and Turkish engagement with international development do reflect notions of "network powers" (Flemes 2013) or "constructive powers" (Schiavon and Domínguez 2016) and resonate with assignations such as "straddling" or "gravitational" states (Robins 2014, 20). In order to focus on specific dimensions of their engagement patterns and positionalities, it can also be a helpful analytical step to frame them as part of the 'OECD world' (Zangl and Zürn 1999; Lodge and Hood 2011) or the 'South' (Grineski and Collins 2008; Eros et al. 2014; Sarabia 2014; Bilgin and İnce 2014; Dorlach 2015; Bilgic 2016; Özkan 2017), as middle powers, emerging donors or cusp states (*see Chapter 2*). Depending on the issue at hand, Mexico and Turkey can indeed be said to be of 'rising' relevance or visibility, at the cusp of or torn between 'North' and 'South', right in the middle of traditional assignations of 'donors' and 'recipients' or between 'Northern donors' and 'Southern providers'. Taken together, however, the various insights gathered throughout the previous chapters coalesce around one central finding: putting Mexico and Turkey in a clear-cut conceptual box and assigning them a neat label eschews a

meaningful analysis of their positionalities and engagement patterns. While there are ways in which Mexico and Turkey occupy liminal positionalities somewhere at the threshold between 'North' and 'South', labelling them as fundamentally 'liminal' or 'in-between' (see Müller 2018) would exclude the many ways in which they have alignments with either poles, are connected to (or claim/try to be) both, or have left behind the spaces defined by binary categories to explore alternative normalities beyond 'North', 'South' and the 'in-between'. In order to understand their positionalities and engagement patterns, the simultaneous ambiguities of all these different realities should not be "reduced on the altar of simplicity" (Adler-Nissen 2013, 11). Approached through the Thirding Lens, the combined analysis of Mexico and Turkey provides rich exemplars of what international development realities look like from the perspective of some of those who do not, 'not really' or only 'sort of' fit with the imaginaries of 'North' and 'South'.

## 2. The Thirding Lens: approximation, simultaneity and emancipation

On a conceptual level, the analysis of Mexico and Turkey has allowed me to build on the initial definition of Either/Or, Both/And and Neither/Nor to further develop and expand the Thirding Lens as a heuristic for examining 'that which does not fit'. In terms of Either/Or, conceptual exploration and precision have evolved around notions of *ambiguity* and *approximation*. Against the backdrop of dominant binaries, ambiguity – related to notions of uncertainty, doubtfulness and confusion – arises when clear-cut assignations are difficult to make (de Beauvoir 1976 [1948]). An Either/Or perspective tries to make sense of these ambiguous phenomena by focusing on dynamics of approximation. While highlighting resemblance with a given pole or category, however, approximation always also contains some level of incongruence. In approximation processes, it is this combination of proximity with elements of distance that reflects the notion of Thirding as another way of engaging with binaries. *Approximation-as-Thirding* contains and highlights the imprecision and blurriness of the 'sort of', 'not really' or 'close but not the same'. A commitment to approximation asks which of two poles a given phenomenon might be connected to more and suggests that through a closer look, more or less subtle notions of difference or distance may appear. Accepting ambiguity

as a fundamental part of social realities, approximation-as-Thirding points to the many ways in which phenomena do not 'quite' fit with the exhaustiveness claims of binary assignations and thus challenges binary claims to order and purity.

While approximation-as-Thirding is the result of adapting the logic of Either/Or to phenomena that do not fit with binaries, a Both/And perspective challenges binary divides by focusing on cross-category combinations and thus – contrary to Either/Or – carries Thirding at its core. With a focus on how the 'And' joins, mixes or unites previously distinct elements, I have developed the conceptual engagement with Both/And Thirding processes around the notions of *simultaneity* and *connection*. Simultaneity refers to a phenomenon being different things at the same time and manifests in how the dual nature of a given phenomenon merges (elements of) two opposing categories. The simultaneity expressed through duality points to the possibilities of 'combined' positionalities that defy the logic of Either/Or. The simultaneous belonging to two binary poles provides the basis for creating a third category that is then part of a new set of 'trinary' relations (Germon 2008). This *simultaneity-as-Thirding* contains both conservative and innovative aspects (Berenskoetter 2014): through the explicit reference to and inclusion of elements of both poles, the binary is accepted as continuing reference; but based on that foundation, non-binary positionalities allow for high levels of flexibility and adaptability.

Based on possibilities of simultaneous belonging, Both/And also puts a focus on the potential of connecting otherwise disparate poles. Centring on links between binary categories, a key trope for Both/And Thirding is the bridge. The simultaneity of elements from two opposing categories – being both here and there – provides the foundation for bridging, understood as facilitating (enabling and improving) inter-pole connections. This points to the constitutive dimension of Thirding processes: bridges bring opposing poles 'into each other's neighbourhood' (Heidegger 1976 [1951]), shape the ways in which passages or connections occur and thus impact the 'shores' their pillars stand on. Bridging carries the potential of playing a more active role in reshaping (or reproducing) the entities that are bridged or, more generally, the social space bridges are positioned in. The bridging of divides and combining of elements from both sides is generally taken as the positive side of Both/And – what I have referred to as 'the best of both worlds'. Attempts to bridge or simultaneously embody one thing and the other, however, can also come with more difficult or challenging dimensions. It is not only that Both/And can also stand for 'the worst of both worlds'; more fundamentally,

the schizophrenia of combining otherwise fundamental opposites – of trying to be 'everywhere with everyone' – can lead to confusion, overstretch and exhaustion.

While Both/And focuses on phenomena that combine and connect elements from binary poles, Neither/Nor goes a step further. Arguably more so than approximation and Both/And Thirding, Neither/Nor is about that which does not fit, the *sui generis* 'we have no words for' (Thompson 2018). Via exceptionalism, isolation and what it can look like to contribute to alternative normalities, I have conceptualised Neither/Nor with reference to the *beyond* and notions of *emancipation*. Faced with a dominant binary, exceptionalism understands distance as one way of being favourably different from the norm. In binary settings, exceptionality claims come with notions of double superiority that relegate both binary categories to the back. With reference to current, past or future grandeur, exceptionality promises a considerable degree of freedom compared to the parameters of binary spaces. Exceptionalism-cum-superiority puts forward a way of unfolding into the 'not-yet' that builds on claims of being better – more generous, more knowledgeable, more efficient – than existing binary options.

At the same time, however, the distance to poles inherent to Neither/Nor also points to isolation and exclusion as the flipside of superiority claims. Not fitting in is often accompanied by experiences of explicit exclusion from established frameworks, or of being used by those who are more favourably positioned. Feelings of loneliness – a heightened sense of 'me-feeling' that stands in opposition to the 'we-feeling' of established groups (Robins 2014) – undermine the capacity to act meaningfully (Arendt 1958). The unease about the lack of capacity to make sense of one's contradictions or stand up to exclusionary binary structures can coincide with perceptions from the outside that label one as problematic, annoying or unsafe. Not knowing who one is – or not finding a box or a home for oneself – can generate limbo experiences, defined by a lack of stability and direction. Without a template or reference point one relates to, feelings of being stuck, out of place or simply lost become part of *de facto* normality. Against this backdrop, what may appear as overly proactive Both/And moves of trying to be 'everywhere with everyone' can actually be attempts to fight the threat of double exclusion and escape from the fear of isolation. Even when limbo experiences are less daunting, they provide the context for feelings of confusion and uncertainty. Leaving established binaries behind and embarking on the discovery of unchartered territory can be exciting and intimidating at the same time. The tensions coming out of these processes of

detachment can accelerate dynamics of breakup and disintegration. While experiences of 'being different' may condition feelings of superiority, isolation or ontological limbo, they can also act as a reference point for attempts to embrace practices that reflect the evolving needs, interests and peculiarities of those who do not fit. As part of an incremental development away from binaries, they are part of more gradual or tentative alternative practices pointing towards a 'different kind of normal' (Wain 2012). This alternative normality can come about through the creative and/or subversive use of established tools, the creation of alternative reference communities where one *does* fit, or the exploration of different (re)framings of what belonging means.

These alternative normalities move beyond the binary as main reference point. In many ways, the notion of 'beyond' best captures what Neither/Nor is about. More forcefully than the approximation of Either/Or and more radically than the simultaneity of Both/And, Neither/Nor pushes for space outside the elements provided by established binaries. Alternative versions of 'normality' are part of the 'articulation of differences' (Bhabha 1994) – the disorientation and disturbance of the beyond – that binaries are unable to deal with or make sense of. While the absence of templates can be stressful, understanding the beyond as a 'space of possibility' (Rumelili 2012) points to its emancipatory potential. In the beyond, traditional parameters lose traction, (begin to) disappear and make space for other – more glorious, more chaotic or simply different – ways of engaging with the world. *Emancipation-as-Thirding* not only contains a critical stance towards that what is but directs the focus towards processes of or struggles for change, where existing limitations and restrictions are left behind in order to embrace alternative (if not necessarily better) ways of being in the world. Establishing distance from dominant binaries is hardly ever a clear-cut process (Fraser 2008) and requires a focus on the specific context in which positionalities unfold. Naming and exploring exemplars (Flyvbjerg 2006) and their idiosyncratic specificities can help with developing a sensibility towards the wide range of potential ways to be positioned in and engage with social space.

Insights from *approximation-as-Thirding* (Either/Or), *simultaneity-as-Thirding* (Both/And) and *emancipation-as-Thirding* (Neither/Nor) undermine the promise of binaries to offer a neat and clear-cut framework for making sense of roles and positionalities. They make life more complex – or rather, they acknowledge and make space for some of the complexities that binary assignations create, ignore and/or are unable to account for. The Thirding Lens

challenges the assumption that there is one stable 'truth' that needs to be discovered. As a heuristic for redirecting and sharpening the engagement with phenomena that do not fit with binaries, the Thirding Lens offers a framework for acknowledging the simultaneity and cross-cutting nature of seemingly contradicting dynamics (*see Figure 3*). With reference to the 'in-between' of liminality and the 'at odds' of queering, the Thirding Lens puts forward an invitation to explore or experiment with different positionalities and forms of interaction in more open-ended ways. Phenomena unfolding against the backdrop of binary oppositions – including those entities and constellations subsumed under Mexico and Turkey – do not need to be assigned to one particular logic. From Either/Or to Both/And and Neither/Nor, the Thirding Lens points to 'different kinds of normal', ways of existing and unfolding that pertain to both, fall between and/or go beyond the spaces defined by binaries.

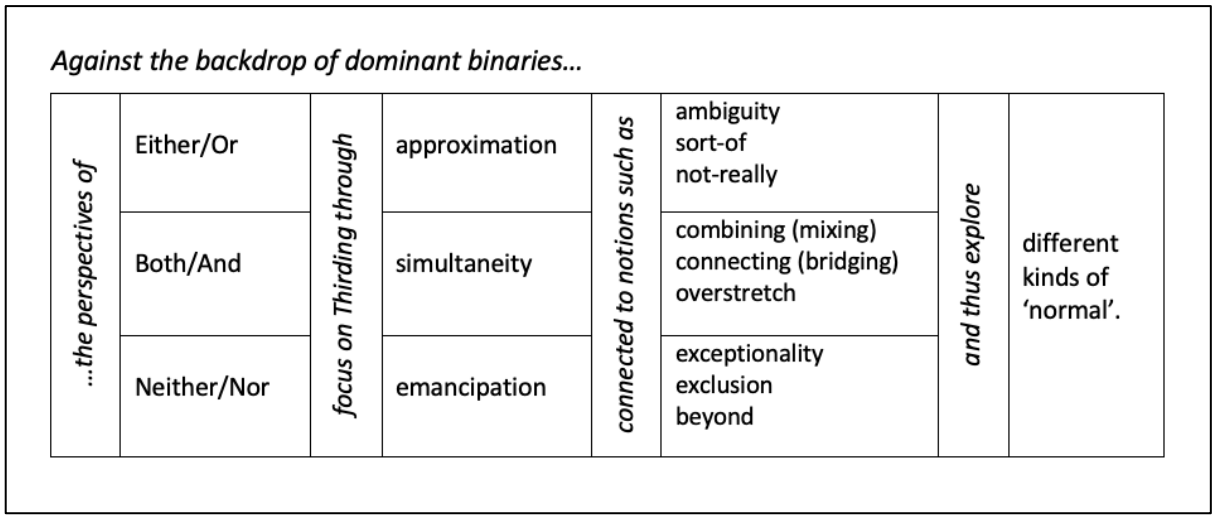


Figure 3 | The Thirding Lens: exploring different kinds of 'normal'

## 3. Another look through the Thirding Lens

Based on the combined analysis of Mexico and Turkey, I suggest that the Thirding Lens is a helpful heuristic to examine current international development realities. With a vantage point that differs from more conventional approaches, it provides an overarching framework that accounts for some of the field's fundamental complexities. In order to illustrate what the

application of the Thirding Lens can look like beyond the in-depth analysis of two cases, I focus on the notions of Either/Or approximation, Both/And simultaneity and Neither/Nor emancipation to present a cursory country analysis that suggests going beyond the quest for singular labels and instead embrace the idiosyncratic complexities of positionalities and engagement patterns.

## Either/Or approximation

Similar to Mexico's *de facto* alignment with G77 voting patterns on development-related resolutions at the UN or Turkey's long-standing yet partial endorsement of DAC donorship standards, country positionalities across the board have been shaped by approximation processes and the ambiguity of 'sort-of' belonging. China is arguably the most prominent example. China has been seen, in many ways, as the quintessential 'Southern' power challenging 'Northern' supremacy (Golub 2013; Gray and Murphy 2013; Gray and Gills 2016), and both the Chinese government and multilateral organisations have used references to 'South-South' to frame Chinese engagement with development-related processes abroad (Xinhua 2019; Lin 2019; ). As part of the Communist world during the Cold War (and, from 1971 onwards, as permanent member of the UN Security Council), Chinese representatives participated in the 1955 Bandung conference; and official sources have repeatedly referred to China as a "developing country" (China Daily 2011, para 1). China's positionality vis-à-vis the 'South' has, however, been far from clear-cut. While it has been listed as a full member state of the G77 (G77 2019), China has preferred and pushed for the 'G77 and China' formula to highlight its close but somewhat separate standing from the 'South' (Kohlenberg and Godehardt forthcoming). Beyond China, other examples for rather ambiguous positionalities vis-à-vis the 'South' are G77 members classified as high-income countries (see World Bank 2019b). Not only Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Oman) but also Singapore and a growing number of Latin American countries (currently Panama, Chile and Uruguay) are arguably somewhat at odds with the self-set understanding of the G77 as "the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries" (G77 n.d., para 2). The qualifier 'developing', in the traditional sense of the term, seems to resonate with the realities of a decreasing number of G77 members. As discussed above, the growing gap in terms of socio-economic realities and political interests among G77 members has led to

considerable tensions in terms of what the multilateral 'South' currently stands for (see Haug forthcoming).

Ambiguities are also found with regard to what it means to belong to the DAC as epitome of the 'North' in international development politics. Japan has long been seen as a rather "abnormal" (Fatton 2013, para 1) case that, despite its economic might, has remained somewhat at the margins of the 'developed world' (Robins 2014). Japanese – and more recently also South Korean – "ODA philosophy and practices" have been described as "markedly different from those of other OECD nations," with a strong focus on bilateral tied aid, concessional loans and infrastructure projects (Kalinowski and Cho 2012, 249; see Chun et al. 2010; Soyeun Kim 2011). This has led to lively discussions about an East Asian, Japanese or South Korean model of development cooperation (Kim et al. 2013; Sato and Shimomura 2013; Atkinson 2018; see Yoon and Moon 2014). South Korea in particular provides an insightful example for the 'Northwards' dynamics of transition. Reminiscent of discussions about Turkey's trajectory in the early 2000s, South Korea has been said to be "the world's first recipient country to transform itself into a [DAC] donor country" (Watson 2011, 58). With a heavy dependence on foreign assistance until the 1970s (Kalinowski and Cho 2012) and until the 1990s still the recipient of ODA, South Korea made its 'change of sides' complete by joining the DAC in 2010 (OECD 2010). For Lee Myung-bak, the Korean President at the time, this was part of Korea leaving the "the periphery of Asia" and moving closer to the 'Northern' centre (cited in McDonald 2010, para 4).

A range of Central and Eastern European countries that have joined the DAC over the last decade have undertaken similar moves of transition. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have so far reported rather modest levels of ODA to the OECD. Even in relative terms, their assistance portfolios have remained small; since they started providing ODA in the late 1990s or early 2000s, their ODA share has remained under or around 0.1 percent of GNI (World Bank 2019p). With their limited engagement and rather recent experience of being recipients themselves, they do not directly correspond to the traditional image of a 'Northern donor'. This is even more the case for countries that – like Mexico – have joined the OECD without joining the DAC (Chile, Estonia, Israel, Latvia and Lithuania), or EU members like Bulgaria, Croatia and Rumania which, while outside the OECD, report ODA (OECD 2017e; OECD 2019a). Also, aspiring OECD members in Latin America – notably Colombia and Costa Rica and more recently also Peru, Argentina and Brazil (Kyburz 2018;

Ayres 2019; Erikson and Lerner 2019) – have their eyes set 'Northwards' without necessarily resembling the traditional image of a 'Northern' country.

While a 'Northward' transition from recipient to donor is very much in line with assumptions of modernization theory about continuous developmental 'progress' (Brohman 1995), there have also been rather unexpected tendencies in the reverse direction. With the 2008/2009 global financial crisis, some European DAC donors – such as Portugal and Spain – suddenly faced challenging budgetary situations, with a direct impact on their development assistance. While Portugal had never been among the most prominent bilateral donors (World Bank 2019j), the impact was felt strongly by Spain's bilateral and multilateral recipients. Once a major DAC donor, in 2015 Spain's ODA stood at only 20% of what it had been in 2008 (World Bank 2019k). In Mexico, a recurring joke during the first years after the setup of AMEXCID – which coincided with Spain's reducing ODA budget – was that "soon we'll assist the Spanish with their development problems" (Int-M-13). Spain as the former colonial power was reducing its engagement abroad, including in its former colonies, while Mexico had just institutionalized its will to expand relations with the world and support others in development processes – a subversion of traditional patterns that only a few years earlier would have appeared unthinkable.

While Spain has gone through a remarkable repositioning as a 'submerging' (Eyben and Savage 2013) – and more recently re-emerging (World Bank 2019k) – DAC donor, Greece was hit even harder by the global financial crisis. With the Greek government unable to service its debt, financial markets began treating Greece "as a developing country" (Mackintosh 2012, para 1). In 2013, Greece became "the first developed country to be downgraded to emerging-market status" (Dunkley 2013, para 1), as traders and index managers did not seem to have a more fitting terminology to describe what was happening with (or being done to) the Greek economy. While Greece had joined the DAC in 1999 (Development Initiatives 2013, 176f) and had never been a major donor – the Greek ODA/GNI ratio had steadily remained around the 0.2 percent level – the financial and economic crises that hit Greece from 2008 onwards meant that in 2013 and 2014, Greek ODA went down to less than 0.1 percent of GNI (World Bank 2019l; OECD 2019m); and the OECD highlighted the severe challenges Greece had been facing "in meeting international aid commitments" (OECD 2011, para 17; OECD 2019n). Together with Mexico and Turkey, Greece has been referred to as part of a group of countries that "are considered developed by some organizations and developing by others" (Investopedia 2019b,

para 13). The 'Southernisation' of Greece, so to say, was said to enlarge the 'developing world' to parts of Europe by creating an intra-European 'South' (Wagner 2017, 14; see Fouskas 2015), upsetting some of the basic assumptions of the DAC-led international development regime.

These examples of 'Northward' and 'Southward' trends suggest that 'sort of' and 'not really' dynamics do not necessarily follow a linear logic but might well go back and forth. Countries that once belonged to the 'socialist ecumene' (Bayly 2010) provide insights into transitions and approximations in different directions. Hungary and Poland, for instance, both provided assistance to other countries during Soviet times and then had roughly a one-decade break in provision between the early 1990s and the early 2000s (World Bank 2019m) when they became recipients of development assistance. As Elzbieta Drążkiewicz-Grodzicka (2012, 3) has put it, Poland's (re)transition from "recipient to donor" in the late 1990s and early 2000s was part of a broader attempt by Polish decision makers to "realize their own dream of modernity and to prove their own developed status", notably in the context of Poland's accession to the EU and explicit ODA goals the EU had set for new member states (Szent-Iványi 2012) .

Russia's oscillation has been even more pronounced. The Soviet Union's engagement with international development flows was once said to be on par with that of the US; as the epitome of the Second World – and thus an integral part of the Brandt-Line 'North' – the Soviet Union had been a major assistance provider (Provost 2011). With the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia became a "net recipient" (Asmus et al. 2018, para 4f); and it took until 2006 for the Russian government to announce its intention to expand, once again, its engagement as provider (Elliott 2010; Gray 2011; Provost 2011; De Cordier 2016). As a "returning donor" (Piattoeva and Takala 2015), Russia was – like Hungary or Poland – on a path "[f]rom donor to recipient, and back again" (Asmus et al. 2018, para 4f). While established international development agencies including the OECD were crucial for the setup of Russia's development assistance programme in the 2000s (Gray 2011), since its annexation of Crimea in 2014 Russia's accession to the OECD has been postponed (OECD 2014). The Russian government, however, has continued to collaborate with the OECD (OECD 2019d) and report ODA at the aggregate level to the DAC (OECD 2019p). At the same time, Russia's 'developed country' credentials regarding its scores on development-related indices are tenuous at best (Investopedia 2019b); and its BRICS membership has led to Russia often – and uncomfortably – being subsumed under discussions about the 'rising South', with both academic analyses and multilateral organisations classifying Russia as a 'rising power' (Roberts 2010; Jacobs and

Van Rossem 2014; Sil 2014; see MacFarlane 2006; Michailova et al. 2013) or 'emerging partner' (UNDP 2013c; UNDP 2013d). Overall, Russia has thus followed another rather atypical international development trajectory, oscillating between poles and never 'really' integrating one or the other.

Taken together, the long list and wide variety of 'not-really' and 'sort-of' positionalities further undermine the already vague contours of the imaginaries of 'North' and 'South', respectively. Importantly, this is not only about countries like Mexico, Turkey or Russia that fall out of typical organizational membership patterns. In light of the substantial levels of heterogeneity within both the G77 and the DAC, the decreasing common denominator of their respective memberships poses a growing challenge to their symbolic relevance. On the one hand, if the economic and political heavyweight China and high-income countries like Singapore present themselves as 'developing countries' in multilateral negotiations, then the traditional notion of the 'South' connected to the idea of solidarity among not only the marginalized and excluded but also those with the will to change international economic structures seems to have reached a dead end (see Taylor 2014). On the other hand, if DAC members like Japan, South Korea, Poland, Hungary or Greece all seem to 'not really' fit with the meaning generally attached to the imaginary of the 'North', it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that "the standardized DAC aid model is neither unequivocally articulated nor shared" (Kondoh et al. 2010, 6). Taken together, patterns of approximation, transition and sort-of belonging across the board challenge the cohesiveness of established labels and thus contribute, in increasingly visible ways, to Thirding the North/South binary.

## Both/And simultaneity

As discussed in Chapter 4, the notion of duality has become an increasingly familiar trope used to refer to countries that are both receiving and providing development assistance (Bracho 2015; Alonso et al. 2016; Gulrajani and Swiss 2017; OECD 2017b). This has been particularly visible in Latin America. While vast differentials exist between Central American countries like Honduras and Nicaragua on the one hand and high-income countries like Chile and Uruguay on the other, the Mexican focus on duality reflects and in some ways epitomizes a more general trend in the region: the back and forth of cooperation flows and the multi-directionality of relations among middle-income countries where all receive and all provide

assistance (SEGIB 2017; SEGIB 2018). This duality also provides a reference for bridging functions in multilateral processes, such as for Colombia, which has continued its engagement with the GPEDC as a representative of the dual country category (GPEDC 2019a), or for Costa Rica, which has been trying to promote the role of MICs in development processes (Lebada 2018). In the 2000s, Brazil was arguably at the forefront of these connecting attempts. As Sean Burges (2013, para 1) has argued, during the presidency of Lula da Silva it was Brazil's

> position as a 'bridge' between the South and the North, which allow[ed] its diplomats to establish the country as a critical coalition organizer and ideational leader for southern actors looking for major changes in global governance systems, and a central interlocutor for northern actors trying to cope with pressure from the South.

In a similar vein, South Korea has been ascribed a "unique position … to understand the complexities of the aid debate and to act as a bridge between the developed and developing worlds" (Watson 2011, 66). Korea's engagement with questions of development effectiveness (Kalinowski and Cho 2012; Mawdsley et al. 2014) mirror Turkey's support for the LDCs and Mexico's championing of FfD and the GPEDC.

Beyond explicit references to or the proactive mobilisation of 'duality' for engagement strategies, a wide range of countries simultaneously receive and provide development cooperation. Like Mexico and Turkey, many of today's 'Southern' providers look back on substantial experiences of assisting other countries with meeting development-related or humanitarian needs, while also receiving ODA from DAC donors (see Mawdsley 2012). While large middle-income countries have remained on the DAC recipient list and sometimes still receive substantial levels of ODA (World Bank 2019n), many of them have also expanded their assistance to other 'developing countries' and present themselves as responsible stakeholders. This has also been the case for post-Soviet countries like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan that, while still on the DAC recipient list, have not only set up – or are in the process of setting up – their own development cooperation agencies but also formally report ODA to the OECD (OECD 2019q; OECD 2019r).

The simultaneity of receiving and providing, however, is not limited to 'Southern' providers or upper middle-income countries that have only recently made the transition towards ODA donorship. Even the US – arguably the hard-core 'North' and the epitome of a post-war donor – has struggled with subnational development disparities (Measure of America 2019) and, in exceptional cases, has also received assistance from abroad. When Hurricane Katrina hit the

US city of New Orleans in 2005, the US government received offers of support from around the world, not only from its NATO allies and neighbouring Mexico (NBC 2005) but also from LDCs such as Afghanistan or Uganda (PakTribune 2005; Fisher-Thompson 2005). As a recipient of assistance in the aftermath of Katrina, the US government struggled to make adequate use of financial and in-kind support from abroad (Solomon and Hsu 2007) – not that dissimilar from what a range of 'developing' countries have repeatedly been criticised for. While the experience of the US as recipient has been limited, other 'traditional donors' have a more extensive track record of being at the receiving end of assistance flows. The Japanese government, for instance, explicitly highlights that "Japan began providing technical assistance while it was still undergoing post-war reconstruction and receiving financial assistance from other donor countries" (JICA 2019, para 5).

In Western Europe, the US government decided to mobilise roughly 13 billion US dollars to support 17 European countries with their economic reconstruction and development through the European Recovery Program, usually referred to as the Marshall Plan (1948-1951) (De Long and Eichengreen 1991; Lancaster 2007). Recipients included not only a range of today's major donors, such as France, (Western) Germany and Switzerland, but also Sweden, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom – all those DAC member states that, for years, have reached the 0.7 percent ODA/GNI benchmark and are among the richest (in terms of GDP per capita) and most 'developed' (in terms of HDI levels) countries in the world (Townsend 2015; Tew 2018; OECD 2019s). The official decision to extend this kind of support to 'underdeveloped' countries in 1949 followed the setup of the Marshall Plan (Escobar 1995). At the very beginning of what would evolve into the post-war field of international development thus stood a major transfer of resources within what is generally seen as the 'North' (see Hjertholm and White 2000; Lancaster 2007).

A Both/And perspective suggests that over time, experiences of receiving and providing are often more closely connected than one might think when faced with mainstream discussions about international development. Most of today's 'traditional donors' were once major recipients; and many countries that, for decades, have been ODA recipients have also provided assistance to others. As highlighted above with reference to recent Russian and Greek trajectories, moving back and forth on the receiving/providing spectrum is not an impossibility; and the last decades have time and again highlighted the contingency of economic and political country positionalities. While dominant patterns of relative economic

and political might that separate the world's richest from the world's poorest countries may not have changed considerably (see Milanovic 2016; World Bank 2019b), a Both/And perspective allows for focussing on dynamics of simultaneity and duality across time that challenge what Jonathan Glennie (2009, para 9) has called the "one-way street paradigm" of international development: the static assumption that some provide and others receive.

In line with this, Both/And can be part of a more general attempt to highlight the existence and promote the expansion of experience sharing and mutual learning across traditional fault lines (see Porto de Oliveira 2016; Huang 2016). As Jennifer Constantine and Alex Shankland (2017, 101f) have argued, multidirectional policy learning holds significant potential for improving livelihoods, also (and maybe particularly) in 'Northern' societies where financial resource transfers are not always the most needed kind of support. From Western Europe to Australia and the US, for instance, a range of 'Northern' countries could learn from Mexico, Turkey, Colombia, Venezuela, Lebanon or Uganda how (not) to host refugees and deal with long-term integration challenges (Betts and Collier 2015; Shellito 2016; Romero 2017). More generally, 'Northern' societies face a range of challenges "southern experiences could help with", from environmental conservation to urban governance, food security or health system reforms (Glennie 2011b, para 16; see Constantine and Shankland, 2017). New York City, for instance, has piloted conditional cash transfer programmes based on lessons from similar schemes in a range of Latin American countries, particularly Brazil and Mexico (Bloomberg 2013; Riccio et al. 2013; Arocena and Bowman 2014); and participatory budgeting processes developed in Porto Alegre have been adapted to contexts in Europe and North America (Herzberg et al. 2013).

As briefly alluded to above with reference to Mexico and Turkey in some ways combining the 'worst of both worlds' (*see Chapter 4*), a substantial list of challenges to development cooperation processes are shared across 'North' and 'South'. This includes questions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of assistance (Eyben et al. 2015; Kenny 2017; Trajber Waisbich forthcoming) as well as the need for development cooperation agencies to justify expenses in front of domestic audiences (Mitra 2017; Anders 2018; Gulrajani 2019). A Both/And perspective allows for tracing not only simultaneity or bridging attempts but also phenomena that connect individuals and institutions across the board. It suggests that the exclusive focus on DAC donors that still permeates large parts of the analysis of international

development (see Dietrich 2013; Reinsberg 2015; Gulrajani and Calleja 2019) is unable to account for an increasing – and increasingly visible – share of global realities.

## Neither/Nor emancipation

Some of the most visible attempts of emancipation from North/South dynamics discussed in Chapter 5 have been claims to exceptionalism. While notions of cultural or civilizational supremacy were not only an integral component of colonial exploitation but also carried on into the setup of the field of international development (see Escobar 1995; Kapoor 2008; McEwan 2009), more recently players outside the DAC have put a more explicit focus on their own civilizational superiority. One of the more prominent examples has included the Indian government under Narendra Modi since 2014 (see Bajpai 2018; Gettleman et al. 2019; Thakur 2020). Supriya Roychoudhury (2019) has argued that *Hindutva* – an ideology promoting the civilizational supremacy of Hindu nationalism – has been the underlying logic of recent official claims to India's exceptionalism. Modi's reference to Hindu notions of India as *Vishwaguru* (the world's guru) resonates with recent official Turkish accounts presenting Turkey in continuation with the Ottoman Empire as the world's shelter or conscience. More "masculinist" (Mawdsley 2019, 9) references to civilizational superiority put India into a category of its own, reflected in a rather self-confident dealing with established donors beyond the dynamics enshrined in the traditional North/South divide (Mandhana 2012). At the same time, India's increasing economic and political clout – and indeed its rivalry with China in the framework of the BRICS and elsewhere – has also added an ambivalent note to its relationship with the 'South' (see Cooper forthcoming).

India has also been at the forefront of another set of practices that challenge traditional binaries in a different and more material way: providing assistance to societies that are 'richer' in terms of GDP per capita. In the Indian case, this has included more than 20 countries, from Armenia and Turkmenistan to Indonesia and Namibia (Fuchs and Vadlamannati 2013). With regard to somewhat counterintuitive patterns of assistance, Timor-Leste is another – if substantially different and arguably more surprising – case in point. Classified as an LDC, Timor-Leste has not only provided assistance to other countries but also reported this assistance to the DAC as ODA (UN-DESA 2019; UNCTAD n.d.; OECD 2017b; OECD 2017e). Beyond questions of quantity – in 2015 the bilateral ODA Timor-Leste provided stood at 4

million US dollars, a rather modest sum compared to other ODA-reporting countries (OECD 2017e; *see Annex 3.3.2*) – this further complicates and confuses donor/recipient assignations that for decades have been at the centre of the North/South binary.

Among DAC donors, another example illustrating dynamics that go counter to and subvert established expectations is Hungary, and notably Hungary's relations with Turkey, as briefly discussed in Chapter 5. As a DAC member since 2016, Hungary – until 2004 itself an ODA recipient (World Bank 2019o) – has channelled its development assistance mainly through multilateral organisations but has also provided some limited assistance to bilateral partners, including Turkey (OECD 2016d; OECD 2019t; see Szent-Iványi 2012). The Turkish government, in turn, has not only set up a TIKA office in Budapest but has also financially and logistically supported Hungarian teaching and tourism infrastructure, sometimes with considerable visibility (TIKA 2017a, 38; see TIKA 2013b; TIKA 2018d; TIKA 2018n). This is connected to a general trend where Eastern European DAC members have been rather modest providers with ODA levels well under 0.2 percent of GNI (World Bank 2019p) while non-DAC providers such as Turkey or the United Arab Emirates have been among the very few countries – DAC members included – that have reported ODA/GNI scores well above the official 0.7 percent goal (OECD 2018e).

As a corollary, references to ODA as such do not play a major role in relations between Hungary and Turkey. Contributions from Hungary (or other EU members like Romania) that reach Turkey are minimal in monetary terms but are captured by ODA calculations (as Turkey is still on the DAC recipient list); the assistance Turkey provides to Hungary, Romania and Croatia, in turn, does not count as ODA (as these countries are no longer on the DAC recipient list). The fact that TIKA's presence in Hungary – in terms of both resources and visibility – is considerably stronger than the Hungarian presence in Turkey (TIKA 2018n; TC-DB 2019b) provides an obvious challenge to traditional binaries: notions of 'developed/developing' fall short of characterizing the link between two upper middle-income countries whose GDP per capita levels have been evolving in roughly similar ways for most of the last three decades (World Bank 2019q). What is more, ODA statistics are unable to capture the relational dynamics between Hungary and Turkey as current official classifications are at odds with actual assistance realities. In line with this, DAC membership – once a status marker *par excellence* – has little or no bearing on how cooperation unfolds.

The ‘different kind of normal’ in Hungary-Turkey relations is part of a more heterogenous set of cooperation realities that is also reflected in the increasingly eclectic mix of development cooperation reporting practices where DAC membership or ODA guidelines have lost relevance as clear markers of ‘donor’ positionality. Similar to Mexico, Brazil has come up with its own reporting methodology that puts forward a detailed framework for analysis without taking ODA as a reference (IPEA 2017). The Chinese government has not set up a systematic reporting scheme but has released aggregate figures through reports and strategy documents, such as its White Papers on Foreign Aid (Xinhua 2012; Brant 2014). In India and South Africa, assistance-related data is available through individual government agencies and the disclosure of public budgets, but the Indian and South African governments have not devised a specific methodology or set up a dedicated development cooperation reporting scheme (see Trajber Waisbich forthcoming). This increasing heterogeneity of reporting realities has provided a considerable challenge to the OECD that, in the words of an Indian diplomat I interviewed, has been the “guardian of the old order and is now struggling to keep up with what’s happening” (Int-G-10).

In an attempt to establish some level of comparability, the OECD has published estimates of the expenditures of non-ODA-reporting providers, calculated based on publicly available evidence (OECD 2017e). While the validity of these calculations is in many cases rather limited, analysts and officials I interviewed at the OECD shared a rather pragmatic outlook. By and large, they recognized the changing dynamics, including the challenges to their organisation’s standing, and reaffirmed the OECD’s desire to adapt in order to remain a meaningful player in an increasingly heterogeneous context (Int-IO-35; Int-IO-42; Int-IO-44). This approach has also been reflected in the OECD’s most recent Development Cooperation Report (OECD 2019a) where ‘donor’ terminology is used significantly less, and with a more critical overtone than in previous editions, building instead on the more widely accepted term ‘provider’ (cf. OECD 2018f). For the first time, the Report has also moved away from its traditional focus on DAC membership in annex classifications: whereas previous analyses made a fundamental distinction between DAC members and non-DAC members (OECD 2018f), the latest report uses the more inclusive and vague terminology of “official providers” to include a range of countries outside the DAC – such as Mexico and Turkey – as well as countries outside the OECD, such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan (OECD 2019u). DAC membership, OECD membership and indeed the reporting of ODA – as the Mexican example highlights – are thus

no longer gatekeeping criteria for inclusion in the main list of providers in official reports. Even at the OECD, the lines separating some of the fundamental categories of international development seem to have become malleable.

## 4. Thirding and the liminality of international development politics

While Mexico and Turkey, in many ways, provide paradigmatic insights into dynamics of approximation, simultaneity and emancipation, their positionalities and engagement patterns reflect the particularities of a wide range of other countries, including those supposedly at the core of either 'North' or 'South'. Recent trajectories of countries from Latin American to Southern Europe, the post-Soviet space and East Asia are all somewhat at odds with clear-cut Either/Or attributions. From DAC donors that once used to be major recipients of assistance, to LDCs such as Timor Leste that not only provides assistance to other countries but also reports it according to ODA guidelines, dynamics of approximation and/or simultaneity permeate the field of international development politics. Even the US as the quintessential post-war 'Northern donor' has piloted social programmes building on Latin American experiences, received support from abroad in emergency situations and faced difficulties with using it. In different ways, most countries do not, 'not really' or only 'sort of' fit with the grand imaginaries of 'North' and 'South' and the related binaries of donor/recipient or developed/developing. While economic and political power differentials persist at the macro level – also, if not exclusively, manifesting along inter-national fault lines reminiscent of developing/developed categorisations (UNDP 2019b) – empirical realities have always been considerably richer than binary frames imply at first sight. Taken together, insights gathered through the Thirding Lens serve as a reminder that being at odds with North/South divisions does not amount to "an exceptional anomaly within an otherwise all-encompassing social/political order, but the very manifestation of the latter's incoherence and vulnerability" (Rumelili 2012, 506). In many ways, the traditional binaries of international development have been – and are increasingly – confronted with phenomena that highlight their incapacity to make sense of and deal with current realities.

While North/South has provided a fundamental set of contested and evolving imaginaries and structuring devices for international development politics, the Thirding Lens can, of course, also be applied to other underlying binaries at different scales to examine the ways in which established truths are being reproduced, challenged and/or transformed. Influential binary constellations in international development have included the traditional division between 'headquarters' and the 'field' in development organisations (Moorehead and Clarke 2015; Anonymous 2016; Smith 2017) or the distinction between (short-term) humanitarian assistance and (long-term) development cooperation (Crisp 2006; Gabaudan 2012; Dunbar and Milner 2006; Wagner 2016). A binary that has been arguably as fundamental for the field of international development politics as North/South, albeit in a different way, is the division between state and non-state actors. The state/non-state divide – and related notions of governmental/non-governmental or public/private – have been structuring logics for a wide range of social contexts (Weintraub and Kumar 1997; Das 2001). The categories of 'country', 'state' or 'government' – crucial also for this dissertation – correspond to just one set of dimensions of what development-related processes are about. The focus on the state/non-state binary highlights that as country constellations, Mexico and Turkey are in many ways part of the *status quo* and contribute to the reproduction of established structures, processes and practices. Beyond the focus on bilateral and multilateral inter-governmental processes, the stakes of non-state entities – not only non-governmental not-for-profit entities like international NGOs or civil society organisations but also social movements, think tanks, philanthropies or private sector companies – has been growing (see Josselin and Wallace 2001; Lewis 2004; Hall and Bierstecker 2009; Lewis and Kanji 2009; Bulkeley and Schroeder 2011).

One set of phenomena that highlight this shift and reflect Both/And and Neither/Nor dynamics are so-called Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). As hybrid constellations bringing together a range of different actors – from government to foundations, private sector companies and/or civil society organisations – PPPs have become an increasingly widespread and influential set of actors and spaces in development-related processes (Beisheim and Liese 2014; Marx 2019). In the health sector, for instance, PPPs like the Global Fund or the Gavi Alliance (and their funders) now wield significant influence in terms of both the governance of stakeholder relations as well as assistance or service delivery (Glasbergen et al. 2007; Chataway et al. 2007; Hellowell 2019). Established players have tried to benefit from that

trend by promoting the inclusion of private sector entities in development assistance processes (see Mawdsley 2015). As part of its recent overhaul of provider classifications in the annual Development Cooperation Reports, the OECD has also begun including non-state entities, such as large international NGOs or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (OECD 2018f; OECD 2019a). While most of these entities are clearly attributable to specific – mostly 'Northern' – countries, the explicit expansion of the meaning of 'provider' beyond traditional state-focused connotations points to another range of ways in which Thirding dynamics have been upsetting established stratification structures.

The ways in which the separation between state and non-state entities has been challenged and weakened join North/South Thirding dynamics discussed throughout this dissertation in contributing to a *liminal* phase of international development politics. As alluded to in Chapter 2, liminal moments are characterized by experiences of transition that usually come with a heightened sense of uncertainty (Horvath et al. 2015; Thomassen 2018). In a liminal phase, the "tacit legitimacy" (Guzzini 2013, 82) of taken-for-granted knowledge – including the hierarchies it sustains – is increasingly challenged through ongoing "contestation and ruptures" (Pouliot 2013, 54). While grand binary imaginaries like those of North/South or state/non-state never fit perfectly on experienced reality, they arguably do so even less in moments of transition. As Maria Mälksoo (2012, 490) has argued, liminal moments – characterised by the proliferation of previously marginal phenomena such as dual positionalities or PPPs – can develop a "generative force" and usually have a "constitutive function" for what is to follow. When traditional doxa are challenged, possibilities of new subjectivities arise, including for agents and spaces that had previously been banned to a field's margins. Liminality highlights contingency and thus points to future possibilities. Following Andrew Cooper and Vincent Pouliot (2015, 342), ongoing changes in international development politics "may be representative of a wider 'interregnum period' … during which the trajectory of the emergent order, including its parameters, is being shaped". For Mälksoo and others working on liminality (see Rumelili 2012; Horvath et al. 2015; Thomassen 2018), there is hope that the interregnum might lead towards processes and frameworks that are "better prepared to deal with the challenges of a globalized world" (Mälksoo 2012, 490) and thus overcome the reproduction of the *status quo* of inequality and exploitation that has plagued international development for a long time (see Ferguson 1990; Easterly 2006; Moyo 2009; Escobar 2011; Kothari et al. 2014).

## From liminality (back) to binaries? The ongoing relevance of the Thirding Lens

When examining the increasingly unstable arrangements that characterise the liminal phase of international development politics, at some point questions about future scenarios are set to come to the fore. What is the result of all that challenging and upsetting and Thirding? What comes 'after' liminality? Building on the notion of transition, recent contributions to liminality research have suggested that modernity can be understood as permanently liminal (Szakolczai 2000; Bamber et al. 2017; Szakolczai 2017). The notion of permanent or "endless liminality" (Thomassen 2018, 4) tries to capture the continuing limbo of having left traditional reference frameworks behind without finding or establishing alternative structures. Even when aware of the lure of presentism – where "the time in-between … is and will always be our time" (Wagner 2017, 3) – there seems to be ample evidence suggesting that international development politics is ushering into permanent liminality. The complex realities of official narratives, reporting practices or country classifications together with the proliferation of actors, venues and modalities as well as increasingly vocal questions about the very contours of what should count as (cooperation for) 'development' have unsettled a wide range of taken-for-granted assumptions (see Mawdsley et al. 2014; Kothari et al. 2014; Alonso and Glennie 2015; D'Alisa et al. 2015; Taggart forthcoming).

While the blurring and unsettling might increase even further, however, another look at the recent trajectory of the 'sort-of Southern' player that has become an unavoidable factor in debates on the future of international development – China – suggests that complexity does not foreclose the continuing or rising relevance of binaries, old and new. The notion of 'G77 and China' briefly alluded to above not only epitomizes a 'sort-of' belonging to the 'South' and contains an important level of approximation-as-Thirding, but arguably points to a more general way of how China is set to (re)shape international development politics. As Paul Kohlenberg and Nadine Godehardt (forthcoming) argue, it is the 'x + China' formula – of which the 'G77 and China' notion is an early manifestation – that increasingly informs China's expanding engagement with different parts of the world, reflected in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (see Taylor 2011) or the 17+1 scheme for China's engagement with Central and Eastern Europe (see China-CEEC 2019; Kavalski 2019). In line with Kohlenberg and Godehardt's conclusion that, increasingly, macro categories and constellations are re-defined in reference to China, the impact of Chinese engagement reflects a strong notion of Neither/Nor: 'North' and 'South' continue to lose meaning as engagement strategies and

positionalities vis-à-vis China become more important. According to Homi Kharas and Andrew Rogerson (2017, 39), Chinese capacities – including financial resources, engagement tools and narrative power – have reached a level where they pose a serious challenge to established institutions, and where China's impact on development-related dynamics "is being felt everywhere."

With reference to the discussion of North/South that marked the beginning of this dissertation, the "necessity to engage with China" (De Haan 2011, 903) not only poses a Neither/Nor challenge to the established contours of international development politics but also points to the rise of another kind of binary. Recently, an increasing number of scenarios have seen the world "drifting back toward a bipolar constellation" (Depmsey 2012, para 11), with China and the US as opposing poles (see Yan 2015; Tunsjø 2018; Kuo 2019; Tricontinental 2020; see Yeisley 2011; Feldman 2013). While the contours of this new binary are said to be fundamentally different from those of the Cold War (Tunsjø 2018, 3f) and seem set to keep evolving, a significant part of the debates in and on the field of international development has already shifted to China's expanding role (see Alden 2007; Woods 2008; Bräutigam 2009; Alden and Large 2011; Taylor 2011; Huang and Ren 2012; Abdenur 2014; Lu 2020) as well as the (potential) cooperation, convergence, competition and/or tension between China and major DAC donors (Carmody and Owusu 2007; De Haan 2011; Li and Carey 2014; Mawdsley 2017a; Hameiri and Jones 2018).

Beyond questions of whether Chinese domestic development trajectories and assistance schemes abroad have been unique or reflect patterns elsewhere (De Haan 2011), and beyond the once-popular debates about the 'Beijing consensus' (Kennedy 2010; Yang 2015) or the 'China model' (Breslin 2011), China's relevance as an alternative pole to the traditional *status quo* embodied by the 'Western-Northern' world in international development is hardly disputed. This has become all the more visible through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's major cross-regional infrastructure and development mega-programme (Chatham House 2019; Chatzky and McBride 2020). While the expansion of the BRI has not come without tensions (see Abi-Habib 2018; Ferchen and Perera 2019) a range of voices across the 'Western-Northern' world are increasingly aware that "the BRI could threaten the very foundations of Washington's post-WWII hegemony" (Cavanna 2018, para 4; see EU-CC 2020). Some analysts now suggest taking China's mega initiative as the main reference for understanding current global patterns of development-related relations, conceptualising the world as divided

between BRI and non-BRI countries (Devonshire-Ellis 2019; de Soyres et al. 2019; Maliszewska and Mensbrugghe 2019; Moreolo 2019; see Chan 2014). The China-US binary – what Padraig Carmody and Francis Owusu (2007) early on referred to as the play of "competing hegemons" – seems set to re-shape the core of international development dynamics. More generally, the promise of multipolarity – popular over the last decade (see Cooper and Flemes 2013; Stuenkel 2014; see Acharya 2017) and inspired by the 'rise of the South' – seems in the process of giving way to yet another binary set to dominate (the analysis of) global realities for years to come.

On a conceptual level, the continuing relevance of binaries would be very much in line with the underlying assumption of initial research on liminality in social anthropology. For Arnold van Gennep (1909) and Victor Turner (1969), liminal phases had a beginning and an end. In its original application, liminality was taken to be a temporarily limited moment of transition between two rather stable situations, such as moments of trance during rituals, or puberty as a phase on the way to adulthood. Following this reading, a liminal phase opens up possibilities and generates alternative potentials but usually leads (back) into an overall less uncertain – and less flexible – setup (see Thomassen 2018). While the liminal phase of international development politics poses a considerable challenge to North/South, donor/recipient or developed/developing, these pairs might well survive and combine with other sets of powerful binary constructions, of which the US/China binary seems currently the most prominent one.

Against this backdrop, the ongoing dilutions and transformations of North/South do not coincide with a loss in relevance for the Thirding Lens. On the contrary, as long as Either/Or oppositions – from geopolitical and geo-economic China/US divisions to arguably even more fundamental binaries such as big/small or yes/no – continue to condition social realities, the Thirding Lens is set to remain a useful tool for approaching and making sense of empirical and conceptual phenomena. When approached through the Thirding Lens, a focus on Mexico and Turkey provides paradigmatic insights into current international development complexities because their idiosyncratic positionalities and engagement patterns reflect more general dynamics. At a closer look, most – if not all – countries that make up the field of international development politics defy clear-cut categorisations.

Instead of – or in addition to – engaging in strategic essentialism to devise an ever-growing list of categories and labels that try to approximate conceptual slipperiness and friction, this

dissertation suggests that the Thirding Lens allows for a different take on social realities. It offers a way to avoid “erasing phenomenological detail in favour of conceptual closure” (Flyvbjerg 2006, 239) by providing a set of perspectives to systematically examine ‘that which does not fit’. By and large, the Thirding Lens is part of a broader attempt to challenge and rethink established normalities by exposing often overlooked realities and introducing alternative perspectives on allegedly well-known positionalities. This alternative approach is maybe less satisfying – if satisfaction is linked to the experience of boxing a phenomenon in order to make sense of it – but arguably more useful for acknowledging and accounting for complexity. In the face of binaries, the Thirding Lens suggests accepting non-closure and the absence of an unambiguous label. It offers a heuristic for engaging with the plurality of positionalities that can be taken as a point of reference to explore the contours of the many ways in which existence unfolds. If the question is “not whether to deal with dichotomies but how to deal with them” (Elbow 1993, 54), the Thirding Lens provides a step towards exploring a multitude of evolving answers.

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For introductory quotes (page 1), see Rosling 2018, Chapter 1; Douglas 1978, 161.

# ANNEX

# Annex 1.

## Interviews

1. Interviews (51) with representatives from the Mexican government [Int-M]

2. Interviews (54) with representatives from the Turkish government [Int-T]

3. Interviews (48) with representatives from other governments [Int-G]

4. Interviews (53) with representatives from international organisations [Int-IO]

5. Interviews (53) with representatives from non-governmental entities [Int-N]

Note: I conducted 256 interviews between March 2016 and December 2017. Main fieldwork took place between September 2016 and September 2017.

1. Interviews (51) with representatives from the Mexican government [Int-M]

| Interview ID | Interviewee | | Interview | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Institution | Position | Place | Date | Type |
| Int-M-1 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 160728 | Telephone |
| Int-M-2 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | New York City | 161026 | In person |
| Int-M-3 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161128 | In person |
| Int-M-4 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161128 | In person |
| Int-M-5 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161215 | In person |
| Int-M-6 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170126 | In person |
| Int-M-7 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Mexico City | 170131 | In person |
| Int-M-8 | AMEXCID | Senior official | Mexico City | 170209 | In person |
| Int-M-9 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170214 | In person |
| Int-M-10 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170214 | In person |
| Int-M-11 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170214 | In person |
| Int-M-12 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170217 | In person |
| Int-M-13 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170217 | In person |
| Int-M-14 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170217 | In person |
| Int-M-15 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170221 | In person |
| Int-M-16 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170223 | In person |
| Int-M-17 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170301 | In person |
| Int-M-18 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170301 | In person |
| Int-M-19 | AMEXCID | Senior official | Mexico City | 170302 | In person |
| Int-M-20 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170302 | In person |
| Int-M-21 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170302 | In person |
| Int-M-22 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170303 | In person |
| Int-M-23 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170306 | In person |
| Int-M-24 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170307 | In person |
| Int-M-25 | AMEXCID | Senior official | Mexico City | 170307 | In person |
| Int-M-26 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170310 | In person |
| Int-M-27 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170310 | In person |
| Int-M-28 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170310 | In person |
| Int-M-29 | Ministry of Energy | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170313 | In person |
| Int-M-30 | Treasury | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170313 | Telephone |
| Int-M-31 | President's Office | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170313 | In person |
| Int-M-32 | President's Office | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170313 | In person |
| Int-M-33 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170315 | In person |
| Int-M-34 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170315 | In person |
| Int-M-35 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Mexico City | 170316 | In person |
| Int-M-36 | President's Office | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170316 | In person |
| Int-M-37 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170317 | In person |
| Int-M-38 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170322 | In person |
| Int-M-39 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170410 | In person |
| Int-M-40 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170411 | Telephone |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Int-M-41 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170606 | In person |
| Int-M-42 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Berlin | 170711 | In person |
| Int-M-43 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Vienna | 170721 | Telephone |
| Int-M-44 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Geneva | 170721 | Telephone |
| Int-M-45 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Mexico City | 170810 | Telephone |
| Int-M-46 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Paris | 170904 | In person |
| Int-M-47 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Paris | 170905 | In person |
| Int-M-48 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Paris | 170905 | In person |
| Int-M-49 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Paris | 170905 | In person |
| Int-M-50 | AMEXCID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 171020 | Telephone |
| Int-M-51 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 171205 | Telephone |

## 2. Interviews (54) with representatives from the Turkish government [Int-T]

| **Interview ID** | **Interviewee** | | **Interview** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Institution** | **Position** | **Place** | **Date** | **Type** |
| Int-T-1 | TIKA | Mid-level official | London | 160301 | In person |
| Int-T-2 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 160412 | In person |
| Int-T-3 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161004 | In person |
| Int-T-4 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161004 | In person |
| Int-T-5 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161004 | In person |
| Int-T-6 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161004 | In person |
| Int-T-7 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161005 | In person |
| Int-T-8 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161005 | In person |
| Int-T-9 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161005 | In person |
| Int-T-10 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161005 | In person |
| Int-T-11 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 161005 | In person |
| Int-T-12 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Ankara | 161005 | In person |
| Int-T-13 | Ministry of Development | Senior official | Ankara | 161006 | In person |
| Int-T-14 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161018 | In person |
| Int-T-15 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | New York City | 161028 | In person |
| Int-T-16 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170120 | In person |
| Int-T-17 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170504 | In person |
| Int-T-18 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170504 | In person |
| Int-T-19 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170504 | In person |
| Int-T-20 | TIKA | Senior official | Ankara | 170505 | In person |
| Int-T-21 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170509 | In person |
| Int-T-22 | Ministry of Development | Senior official | Ankara | 170509 | In person |
| Int-T-23 | Scientific and Technological Research Council (TÜBITAK) | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170511 | In person |
| Int-T-24 | Scientific and Technological Research Council (TÜBITAK) | Senior official | Ankara | 170511 | In person |
| Int-T-25 | Ministry of EU Affairs | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170512 | In person |
| Int-T-26 | Ministry of EU Affairs | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170512 | In person |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Int-T-27 | Ministry of Development | Senior official | Ankara | 170512 | In person |
| Int-T-28 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170529 | In person |
| Int-T-29 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170529 | In person |
| Int-T-30 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170530 | In person |
| Int-T-31 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Ankara | 170530 | In person |
| Int-T-32 | Treasury | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170530 | In person |
| Int-T-33 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170531 | In person |
| Int-T-34 | Prime Minister's Office | Senior official | Ankara | 170531 | In person |
| Int-T-35 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170531 | In person |
| Int-T-36 | Turks Abroad Agency | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170531 | In person |
| Int-T-37 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170531 | In person |
| Int-T-38 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170601 | In person |
| Int-T-39 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170602 | In person |
| Int-T-40 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170602 | In person |
| Int-T-41 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170602 | In person |
| Int-T-42 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170603 | In person |
| Int-T-43 | TIKA | Senior official | Ankara | 170702 | In person |
| Int-T-44 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170703 | In person |
| Int-T-45 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Ankara | 170704 | In person |
| Int-T-46 | Yunus Emre Institutes | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170704 | In person |
| Int-T-47 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170705 | In person |
| Int-T-48 | Ministry of Development | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170705 | In person |
| Int-T-49 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Paris | 170904 | In person |
| Int-T-50 | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Paris | 170904 | In person |
| Int-T-51 | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | London | 171009 | In person |
| Int-T-52 | Ministry of EU Affairs | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170512 | In person |
| Int-T-53 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Berlin | 171020 | In person |
| Int-T-54 | TIKA | Mid-level official | Ankara | 171116 | Telephone |

## 3. Interviews (48) with representatives from other governments [Int-G]

| **Interview** | **Interviewee** | | | **Interview** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ID** | **Institution** | **Position** | **Place** | **Place** | **Date** | **Type** |
| Int-G-1 | Germany | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161020 | In person |
| Int-G-2 | Switzerland | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | Bern | 161031 | Telephone |
| Int-G-3 | Canada | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161110 | In person |
| Int-G-4 | Egypt | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161110 | In person |
| Int-G-5 | Switzerland | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | New York City | 161113 | In person |
| Int-G-6 | Afghanistan | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161114 | In person |
| Int-G-7 | Switzerland | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161116 | In person |
| Int-G-8 | Georgia | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | New York City | 161117 | In person |
| Int-G-9 | El Salvador | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | New York City | 161118 | In person |
| Int-G-10 | India | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161118 | In person |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Int-G-11 | Palestine | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161121 | In person |
| Int-G-12 | Russia | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161121 | In person |
| Int-G-13 | Cyprus | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161122 | In person |
| Int-G-14 | Denmark | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161122 | In person |
| Int-G-15 | Guatemala | Foreign Ministry | Senior official | New York City | 161205 | In person |
| Int-G-16 | Costa Rica | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161206 | In person |
| Int-G-17 | US | USAID | Mid-level official | Washington D.C. | 161207 | In person |
| Int-G-18 | US | USAID | Mid-level official | Washington D.C. | 161207 | In person |
| Int-G-19 | US | USAID | Mid-level official | Washington D.C. | 161208 | In person |
| Int-G-20 | Korea | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161220 | In person |
| Int-G-21 | Korea | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 161220 | In person |
| Int-G-22 | Switzerland | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170112 | In person |
| Int-G-23 | Peru | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170112 | In person |
| Int-G-24 | Azerbaijan | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170113 | In person |
| Int-G-25 | Somalia | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170113 | Telephone |
| Int-G-26 | European Union | External Action Service | Mid-level official | New York City | 170119 | In person |
| Int-G-27 | Germany | GIZ | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170221 | In person |
| Int-G-28 | Germany | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170222 | In person |
| Int-G-29 | Japan | JICA | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170308 | In person |
| Int-G-30 | US | USAID | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170308 | In person |
| Int-G-31 | Germany | GIZ | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170314 | In person |
| Int-G-32 | UK | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | New York City | 170321 | In person |
| Int-G-33 | Hungary | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Budapest | 170419 | In person |
| Int-G-34 | Hungary | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level officials | Budapest | 170419 | In person |
| Int-G-35 | Hungary | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level officials | Budapest | 170419 | In person |
| Int-G-36 | Bulgaria | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Sofia | 170421 | In person |
| Int-G-37 | Germany | GIZ | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170507 | In person |
| Int-G-38 | European Union | External Action Service | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170601 | In person |
| Int-G-39 | Germany | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170607 | In person |
| Int-G-40 | Indonesia | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170607 | In person |
| Int-G-41 | Australia | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170704 | In person |
| Int-G-42 | Germany | Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development | Mid-level official | Berlin | 170710 | In person |
| Int-G-43 | Germany | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Berlin | 170711 | In person |
| Int-G-44 | Germany | Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development | Senior official | Bonn | 170713 | In person |
| Int-G-45 | Germany | Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development | Mid-level official | Bonn | 170718 | Telephone |
| Int-G-46 | Germany | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Paris | 170905 | In person |
| Int-G-47 | Indonesia | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Jakarta | 171105 | Telephone |
| Int-G-48 | Indonesia | Foreign Ministry | Mid-level official | Jakarta | 171107 | Telephone |

4. Interviews (50) with representatives from international organisations [Int-IO]

| Interview ID | Interviewee | | Interview | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Institution | Position | Place | Date | Type |
| Int-IO-1 | UN DOCO | Mid-level official | New York City | 160411 | In person |
| Int-IO-2 | UN OCHA | Junior official | Gaziantep | 160930 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-3 | UNDP | Senior official | Istanbul | 161007 | In person |
| Int-IO-4 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Istanbul | 161007 | In person |
| Int-IO-5 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Istanbul | 161007 | In person |
| Int-IO-6 | UNDP | Junior official | New York City | 161012 | In person |
| Int-IO-7 | UN OCHA | Mid-level official | New York City | 161025 | In person |
| Int-IO-8 | UN Secretariat | Senior official | New York City | 161026 | In person |
| Int-IO-9 | UN Secretariat | Mid-level official | New York City | 161031 | In person |
| Int-IO-10 | UN Secretariat | Mid-level official | New York City | 161031 | In person |
| Int-IO-11 | UN OCHA | Mid-level official | New York City | 161031 | In person |
| Int-IO-12 | World Bank | Mid-level official | Washington | 161109 | In person |
| Int-IO-13 | IMF | Mid-level official | Washington | 161109 | In person |
| Int-IO-14 | UNDP | Mid-level official | New York City | 161202 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-15 | UN Secretariat | Mid-level official | New York City | 161212 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-16 | UNDP | Mid-level official | New York City | 161215 | In person |
| Int-IO-17 | UN Secretariat | Junior official | New York City | 161215 | In person |
| Int-IO-18 | UN OHRLLS | Mid-level official | New York City | 161215 | In person |
| Int-IO-19 | OECD | Senior official | New York City | 161216 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-20 | UN Secretariat | Junior official | New York City | 161216 | In person |
| Int-IO-21 | UN Secretariat | Mid-level official | New York City | 161219 | In person |
| Int-IO-22 | UN Secretariat | Mid-level official | New York City | 170117 | In person |
| Int-IO-23 | UNDP | Mid-level official | New York City | 170117 | In person |
| Int-IO-24 | UNDP | Mid-level official | New York City | 170119 | In person |
| Int-IO-25 | UNOSSC | Mid-level official | New York City | 170119 | In person |
| Int-IO-26 | UNOSSC | Mid-level official | New York City | 170119 | In person |
| Int-IO-27 | UN Secretariat | Senior official | New York City | 170124 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-28 | OECD | Senior official | Mexico City | 170313 | In person |
| Int-IO-29 | UNDP | Senior official | Mexico City | 170317 | In person |
| Int-IO-30 | UNDP | Mid-level official | New York City | 170323 | In person |
| Int-IO-31 | UNDP | Senior official | New York City | 170323 | In person |
| Int-IO-32 | OSCE | Mid-level official | Belgrade | 170420 | In person |
| Int-IO-33 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170505 | In person |
| Int-IO-34 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Ankara | 170518 | In person |
| Int-IO-35 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170601 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-36 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170601 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-37 | Developing 8 | Mid-level official | Istanbul | 170614 | In person |
| Int-IO-38 | Turkic Council | Mid-level official | Istanbul | 170623 | In person |
| Int-IO-39 | Turkic Council | Mid-level official | Istanbul | 170623 | In person |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Int-IO-40 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170824 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-41 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170902 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-42 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170903 | In person |
| Int-IO-43 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170904 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-44 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170904 | In person |
| Int-IO-45 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170904 | In person |
| Int-IO-46 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 170904 | In person |
| Int-IO-47 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170915 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-48 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170918 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-49 | UNDP | Mid-level official | Mexico City | 170918 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-50 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 171027 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-51 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 171030 | In person |
| Int-IO-52 | UN Secretariat | Mid-level official | New York City | 171102 | Telephone |
| Int-IO-53 | OECD | Mid-level official | Paris | 171214 | Telephone |

## 5. Interviews (53) with representatives from non-governmental entities [Int-N]

| **Interview ID** | **Interviewee** | | | | **Interview** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Country** | **Sector** | **Institution** | **Position** | **Place** | **Date** | **Type** |
| Int-N-1 | Mexico | Academia | Colegio de México | Professor | Mexico City | 160405 | In person |
| Int-N-2 | Mexico | Academia | Mora Institute | Professor | Mexico City | 160405 | In person |
| Int-N-3 | Mexico | Academia | Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas | Professor | Mexico City | 160407 | In person |
| Int-N-4 | Mexico | NGO | Independent consultant | Consultant | Mexico City | 170302 | In person |
| Int-N-5 | Mexico | Academia | Mora Institute | Professor | Mexico City | 170303 | In person |
| Int-N-6 | Mexico | NGO | Independent consultant | Consultant | Mexico City | 170307 | In person |
| Int-N-7 | Mexico | NGO | Oxfam Mexico | Programme officer | Mexico City | 170309 | In person |
| Int-N-8 | Mexico | NGO | Network NGO | Programme officer | Mexico City | 170316 | In person |
| Int-N-9 | Mexico | Academia | Mora Institute | Professor | Mexico City | 170316 | In person |
| Int-N-10 | Mexico | Academia | Colegio de México | Professor | Mexico City | 170317 | In person |
| Int-N-11 | Mexico | Academia | Colegio de México | Professor | Mexico City | 170317 | In person |
| Int-N-12 | Mexico | NGO | Independent consultant | Consultant | Mexico City | 170317 | In person |
| Int-N-13 | Mexico | NGO | Equidad de Género | Policy analyst | New York City | 170321 | In person |
| Int-N-14 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Professor | Istanbul | 161003 | In person |
| Int-N-15 | Turkey | NGO | Network NGO | Programme officer | New York City | 170322 | In person |
| Int-N-16 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Professor | Istanbul | 170424 | In person |
| Int-N-17 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Professor | Istanbul | 170424 | In person |
| Int-N-18 | Turkey | Think Tank | Istanbul Policy Center | Senior Researcher | Istanbul | 170426 | In person |
| Int-N-19 | Turkey | Media | Public Broadcasting | Journalist | Istanbul | 170428 | In person |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Int-N-20 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Assistant Professor | Istanbul | 170502 | In person |
| Int-N-21 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Assistant Professor | Istanbul | 170502 | In person |
| Int-N-22 | Turkey | Academia | Istanbul Şehir University | Professor | Istanbul | 170503 | In person |
| Int-N-23 | Turkey | NGO | Independent Consultant | Consultant | Istanbul | 170503 | In person |
| Int-N-24 | Turkey | NGO | Network NGO | Project manager | Ankara | 170504 | In person |
| Int-N-25 | Turkey | Think Tank | Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV) | Senior Researcher | Ankara | 170504 | In person |
| Int-N-26 | Turkey | Media | Public Broadcasting | Journalist | Ankara | 170509 | In person |
| Int-N-27 | Turkey | Academia | Bilkent University | Researcher | Ankara | 170510 | In person |
| Int-N-28 | Turkey | Academia | Bilkent University | Professor | Ankara | 170510 | In person |
| Int-N-29 | Turkey | Think Tank | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) | Senior Researcher | Istanbul | 170513 | In person |
| Int-N-30 | Turkey | Think Tank | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) | Senior Researcher | Istanbul | 170515 | In person |
| Int-N-31 | Turkey | NGO | Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) | Senior Executive | Istanbul | 170517 | In person |
| Int-N-32 | Turkey | NGO and Academia | Galatasaray Univeristy | Professor and CSO representative | Istanbul | 170517 | In person |
| Int-N-33 | Turkey | NGO | Kızılay | Programme manager | Ankara | 170602 | In person |
| Int-N-34 | Turkey | NGO | Kızılay | Programme manager | Ankara | 170604 | In person |
| Int-N-35 | Turkey | Think Tank | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) | Senior Researcher | Ankara | 170606 | In person |
| Int-N-36 | Turkey | Private sector | Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSIAD) | Senior Executive | Istanbul | 170606 | Email |
| Int-N-37 | Turkey | Private sector | Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSIAD) | Senior Executive | Istanbul | 170612 | In person |
| Int-N-38 | Turkey | NGO | Oxfam | Senior Executive | Istanbul | 170613 | In person |
| Int-N-39 | Turkey | NGO | Yeryüzü Doktorları | Programme manager | Istanbul | 170614 | In person |
| Int-N-40 | Turkey | Private sector | Consultancy firm | Programme manager | Istanbul | 170616 | In person |
| Int-N-41 | Turkey | NGO | Network NGO | Programme manager | Istanbul | 170630 | In person |
| Int-N-42 | Turkey | Academia | Bilkent University | Assistant Professor | Ankara | 170703 | In person |
| Int-N-43 | Turkey | NGO | Network NGO | Programme manager | Ankara | 170704 | In person |
| Int-N-44 | Turkey | Academia | The Turkish Center for Asia Pacific Studies | Professor | Ankara | 170704 | In person |
| Int-N-45 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Researcher | Istanbul | 170706 | In person |
| Int-N-46 | Turkey | Academia | Koç University | Researcher | Istanbul | 170706 | In person |
| Int-N-47 | Germany | Think Tank | Friedrich Ebert Foundation | Senior Executive and | New York City | 161110 | In person |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Programme manager | | | |
| Int-N-48 | China | Academia | Chinese Academy of Social Sciences | Professor | New York City | 161128 | In person |
| Int-N-49 | Serbia | Media | Public Broadcasting | Journalist | Belgrade | 170420 | In person |
| Int-N-50 | Bulgaria | Private sector | Consultancy services | Senior Executives | Sofia | 170422 | In person |
| Int-N-51 | Brazil | NGO | Independent Consultant | Consultant | Rio de Janeiro | 171002 | Telephone |
| Int-N-52 | US | NGO | Independent Consultant | Consultant | Washington D.C. | 171018 | Telephone |
| Int-N-53 | UK | Think Tank | Overseas Development Institute | Researcher | London | 171219 | Telephone |

# Annex 2.

# Map(ping)s

2.1 Brandt Line

2.2 Member countries of the OECD-DAC

2.3 Countries on the DAC List of ODA Recipients

2.4 Member countries of the G77

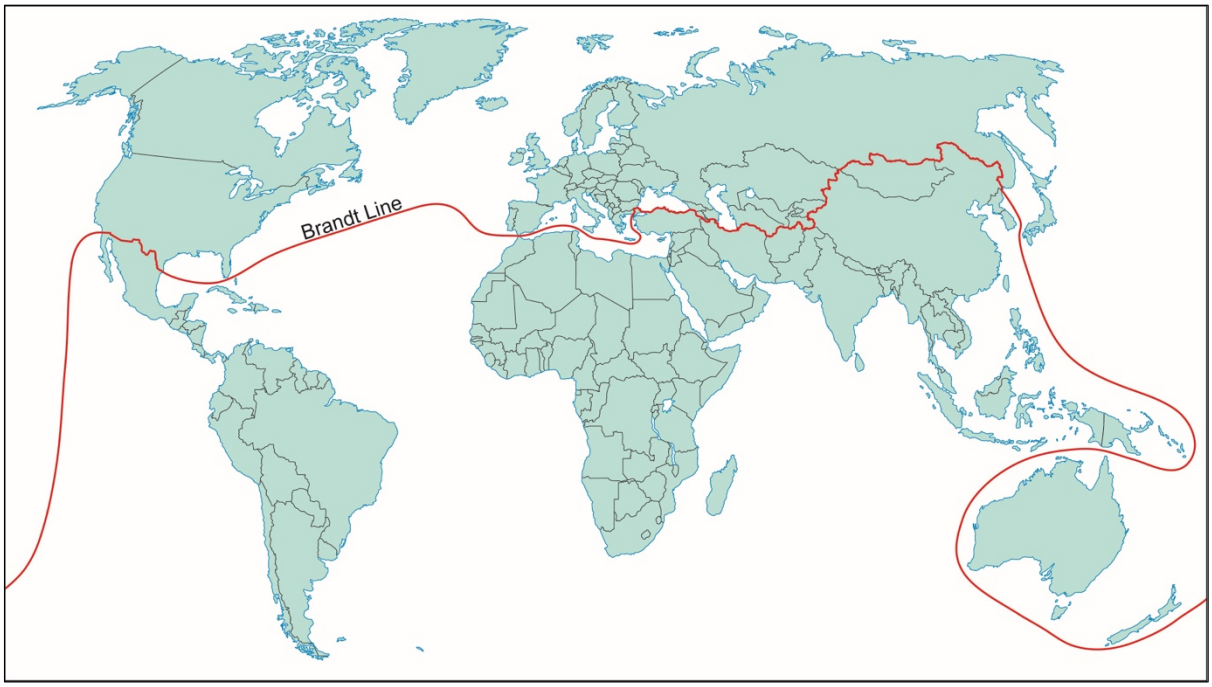
2.5 G20 countries and international development politics: broad frames

2.6 AMEXCID's bilateral development cooperation recipients and 'South-South' partners

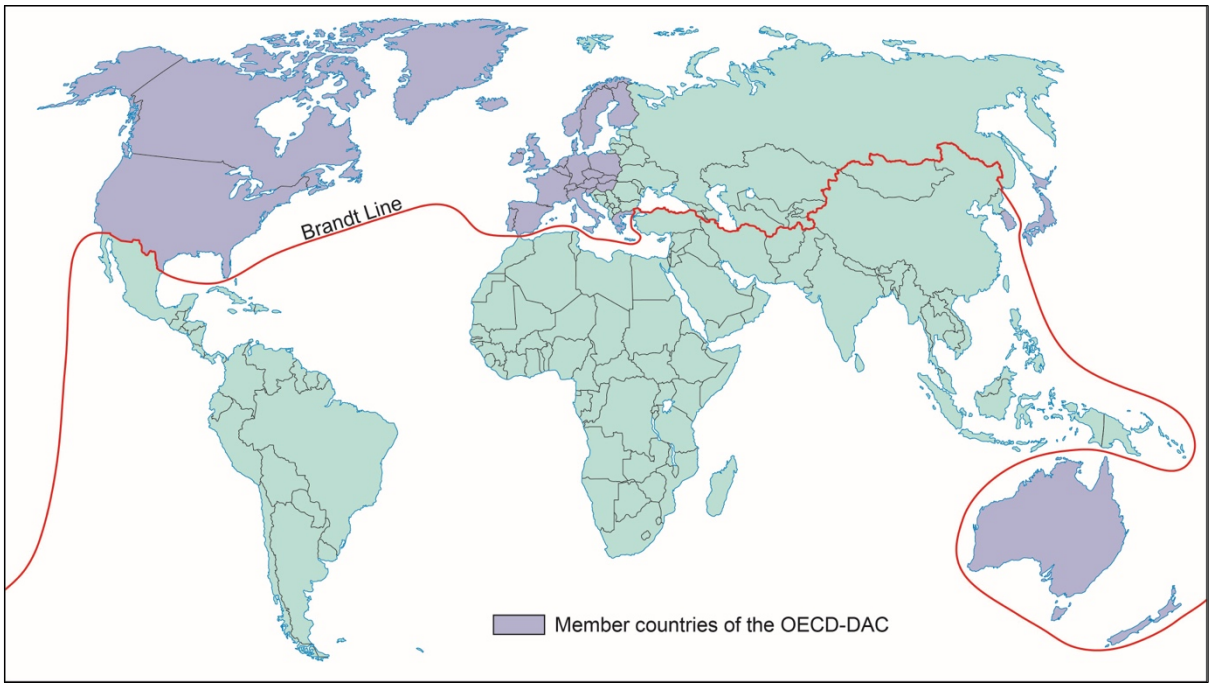
2.7 Countries with TIKA overseas offices

Note: Philip Stickler (University of Cambridge) drew the maps. The content of maps and mappings is the product of my own elaboration, based on data publicly available in December 2019.

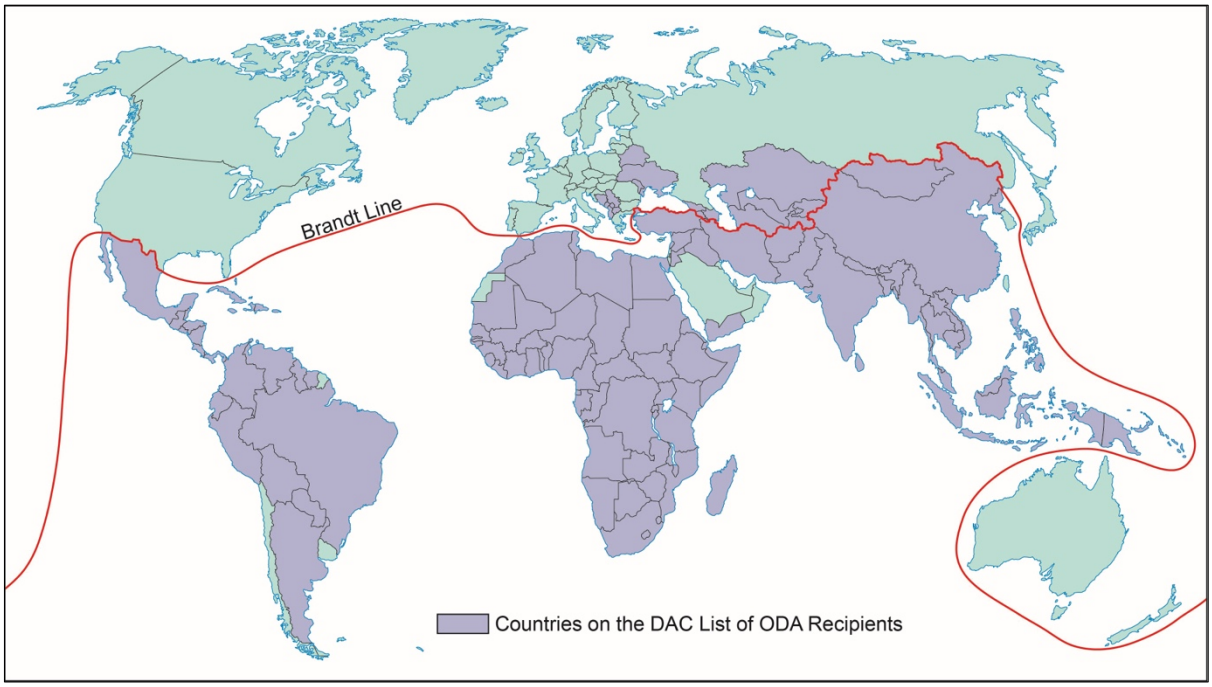
## 2.1. Brandt Line



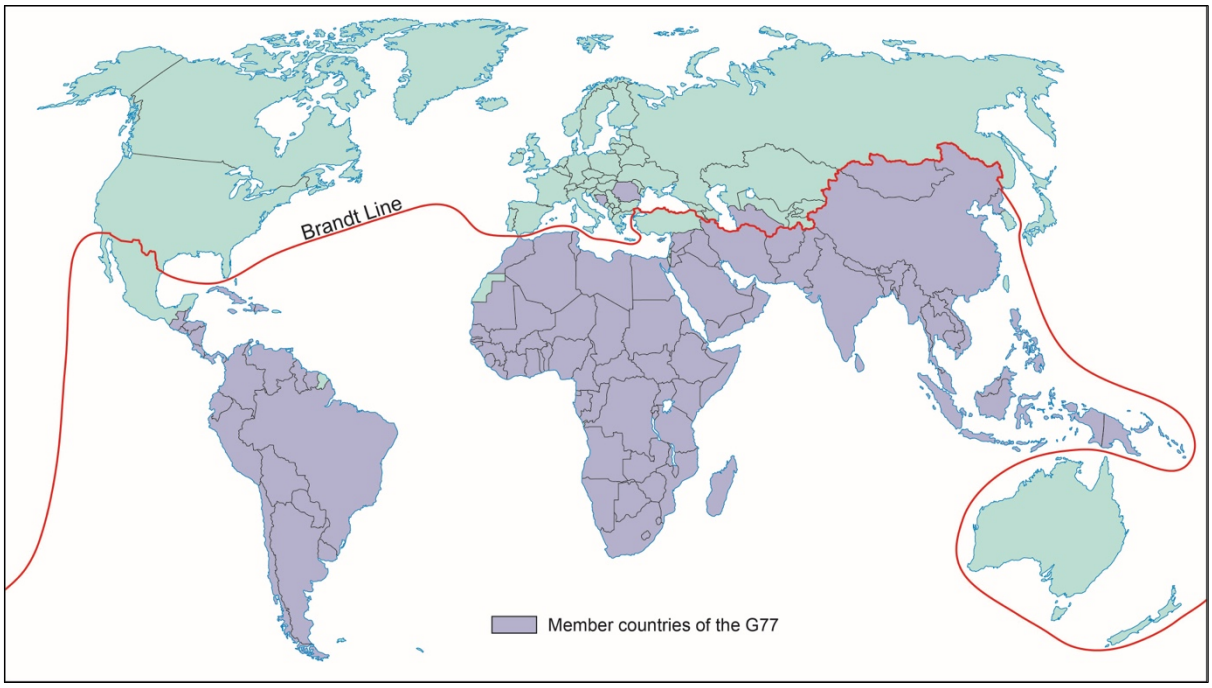

## 2.2 Member countries of the OECD-DAC



## 2.3 Countries on the DAC List of ODA Recipients




## 2.4 Member countries of the G77



## 2.5 G20 countries and international development politics: broad frames

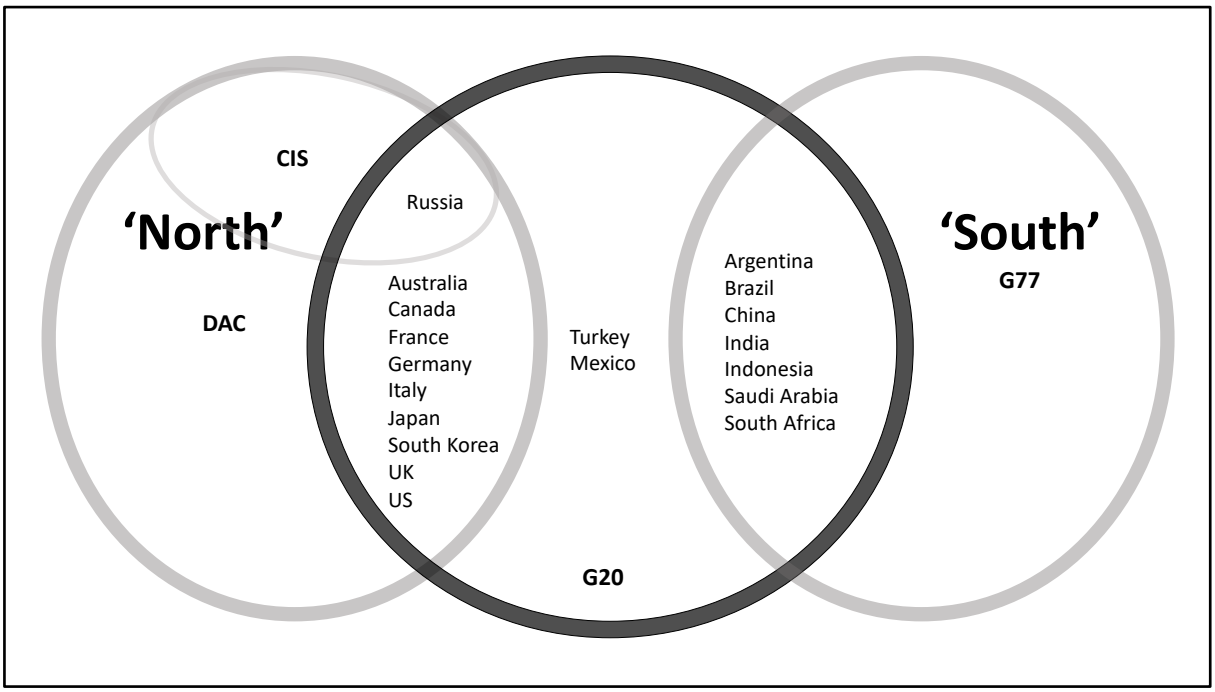



Figure 2a | Approximation of how G20 countries are institutionally positioned in international development politics: The Brandt-Line 'South' (G77 membership) and the Brandt Line 'North' (memberships of the DAC and the Commonwealth of Independent States).

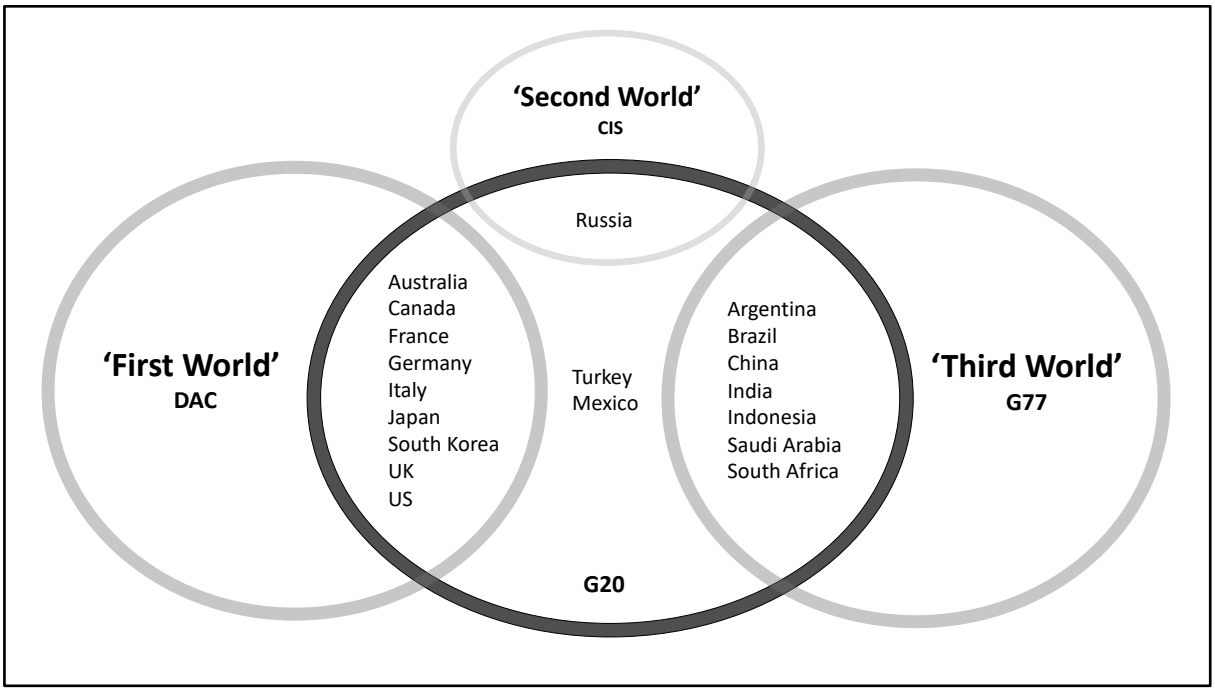
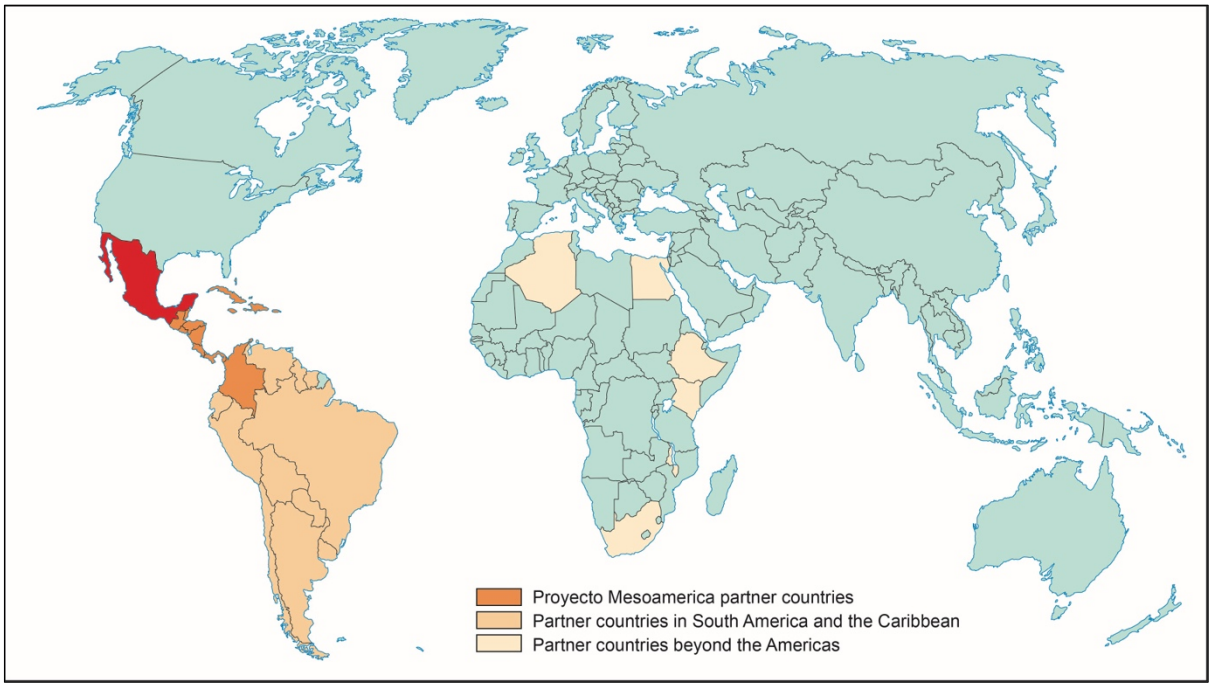
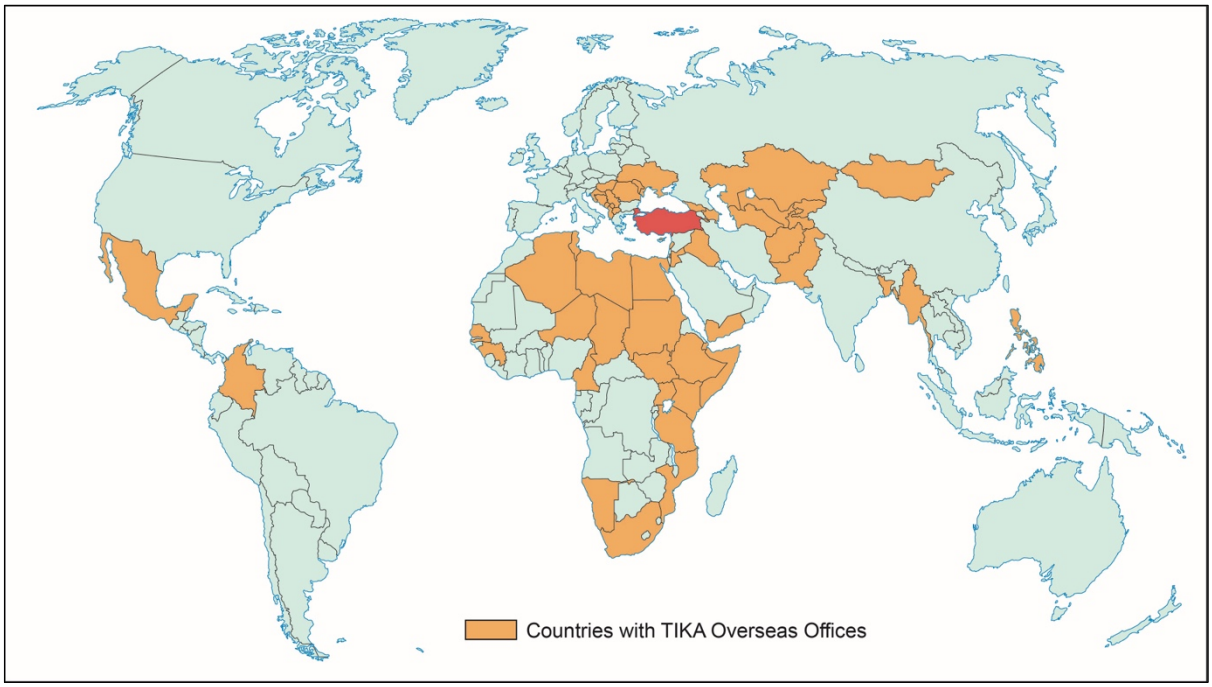



Figure 2b | Approximation of how G20 countries are institutionally positioned in international development politics: the broad frames of 'First World' (DAC membership), 'Second World' (Commonwealth of Independent States membership) and 'Third World (G77 membership).

## 2.6 AMEXCID's bilateral development cooperation recipients and 'South-South' partners




## 2.7 Countries with TIKA overseas offices



# Annex 3.

# Development cooperation statistics

## 3.1 Mexico: development cooperation statistics



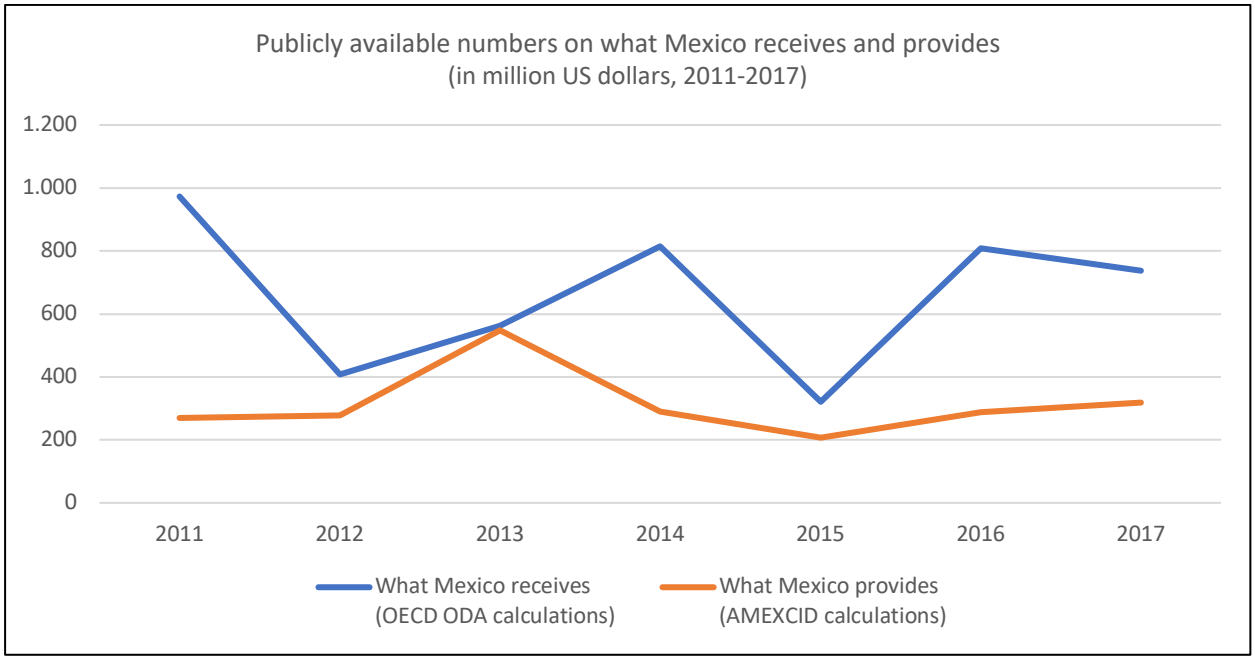
## 3.2 Turkey: development cooperation statistics



## 3.3 Mexico and Turkey: compared to broader dynamics and trends

## 3.1 Mexico: development cooperation statistics

### 3.1.1 Publicly available data on what Mexico has received and provided (2011-2017)



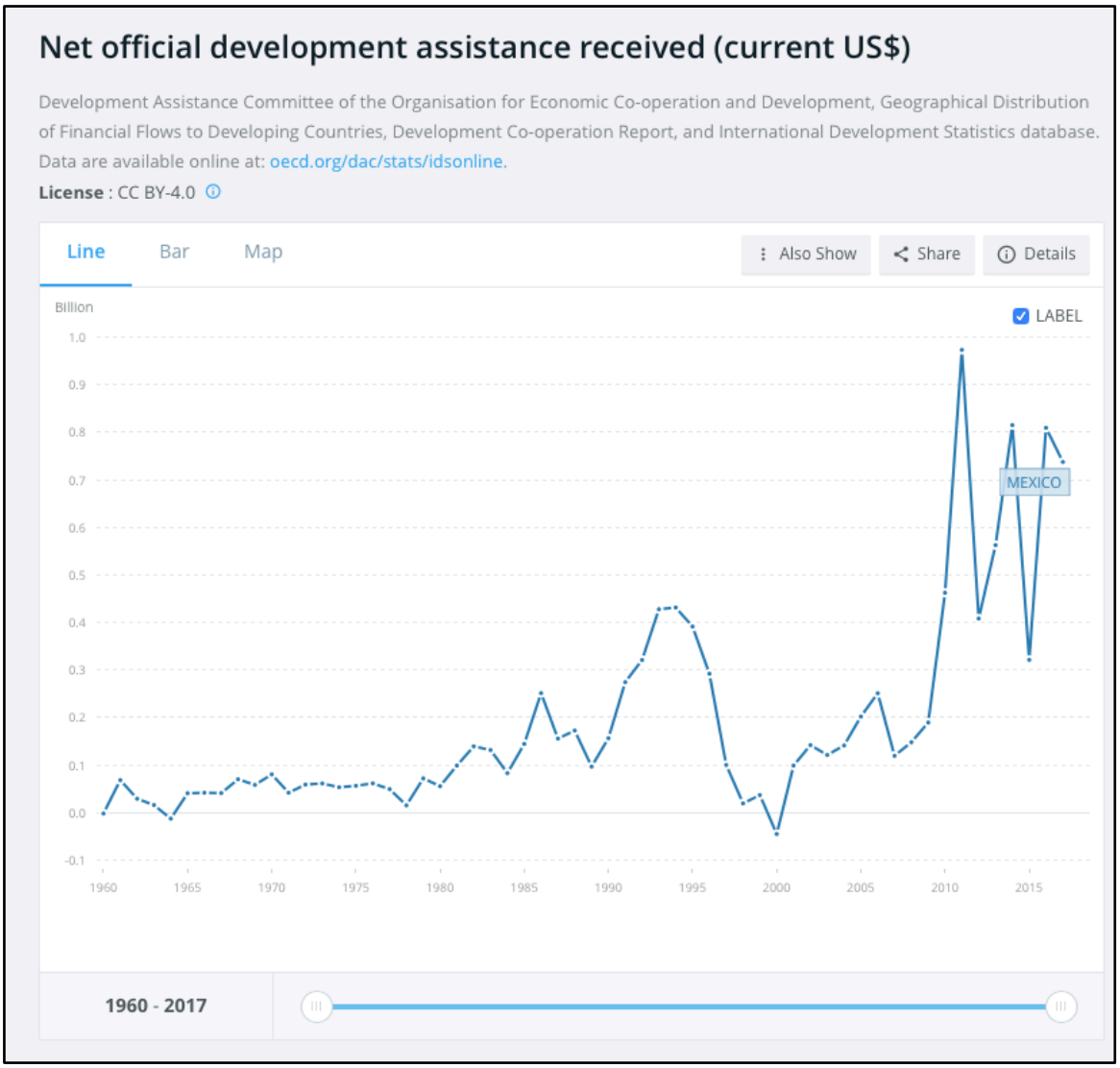

Source: Own elaboration, based on World Bank 2019r and AMEXCID 2018m. As ODA standards and AMEXCID's methodology differ, the comparison of data flows is inherently limited.

### 3.1.2 Mexico as provider: AMEXCID quantification exercise (2011-2017)

| | TOTAL (in US dollars) | | Contributions to international organisations (in %) | Technical cooperation (in %)** | AMEXCID operational costs (in %) | Humanitarian assistance (in %) | Financial cooperation (in %) | Scholarships (in %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2011 | 268,672,379 | | 82.4 | 07.6 | n/a | 01.2 | 07.2*** | 01.6*** |
| 2012 | 277,073,094 | | 64.9 | 07.0 | n/a | 00.2 | 25.6*** | 02.2*** |
| 2013* | 548,390,253 | | 24.6 | 01.8 | 01.0 | 00.2 | 68.8 | 03.6 |
| 2014 | 288,655,350 | | 78.2 | 03.1 | 03.2 | 02.4 | 05.7 | 07.4 |
| 2015 | 207,061,693 | | 74.1 | 03.9 | 03.4 | 00.2 | 07.0 | 11.4 |
| 2016 | 287,913,562 | | 86.7 | 02.3 | 02.3 | 00.2 | 01.7 | 06.8 |
| 2017 | 317,645,224 | | 88.1 | 02.5 | n/a | 00.5 | 00.1 | 06.8 |

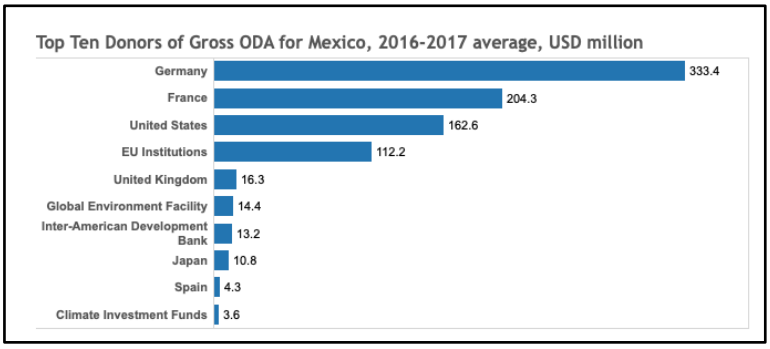
* The amount for 2013 is exceptionally high because it includes a concessional loan and debt relief of combined roughly 370 million USD.
** For 2011, 2012 and 2017 this includes AMEXCID operational costs (due to changes in the designation of categories).
***Designation of categories in 2011 and 2012 differ compared to other years.
Source: Own elaboration, based on AMEXCID 2018m.

### 3.1.3 Mexico as recipient: ODA received (1960-2017)




Source: World Bank 2019r.

### 3.1.4 Mexico as recipient: Mexico's top ten ODA donors (2016-2017)

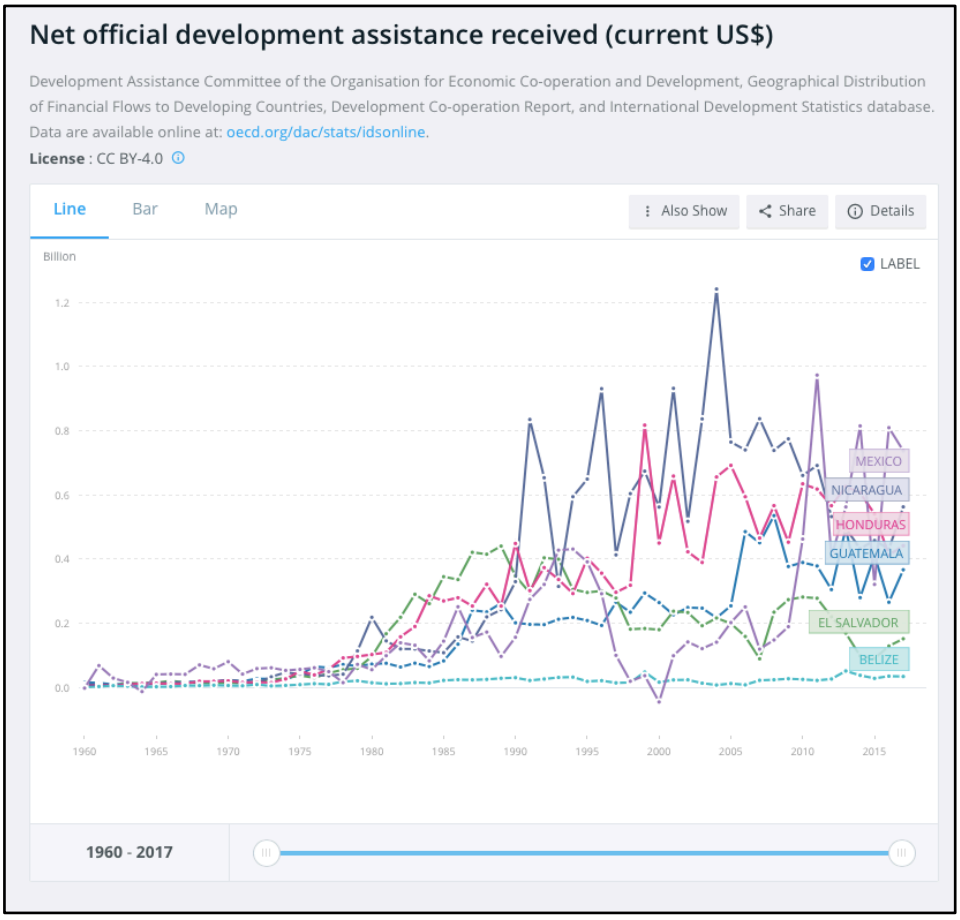



Source: OECD 2019h.

### 3.1.5 Mexico as recipient: ODA to Mexico from Germany and the US (1965-2017)

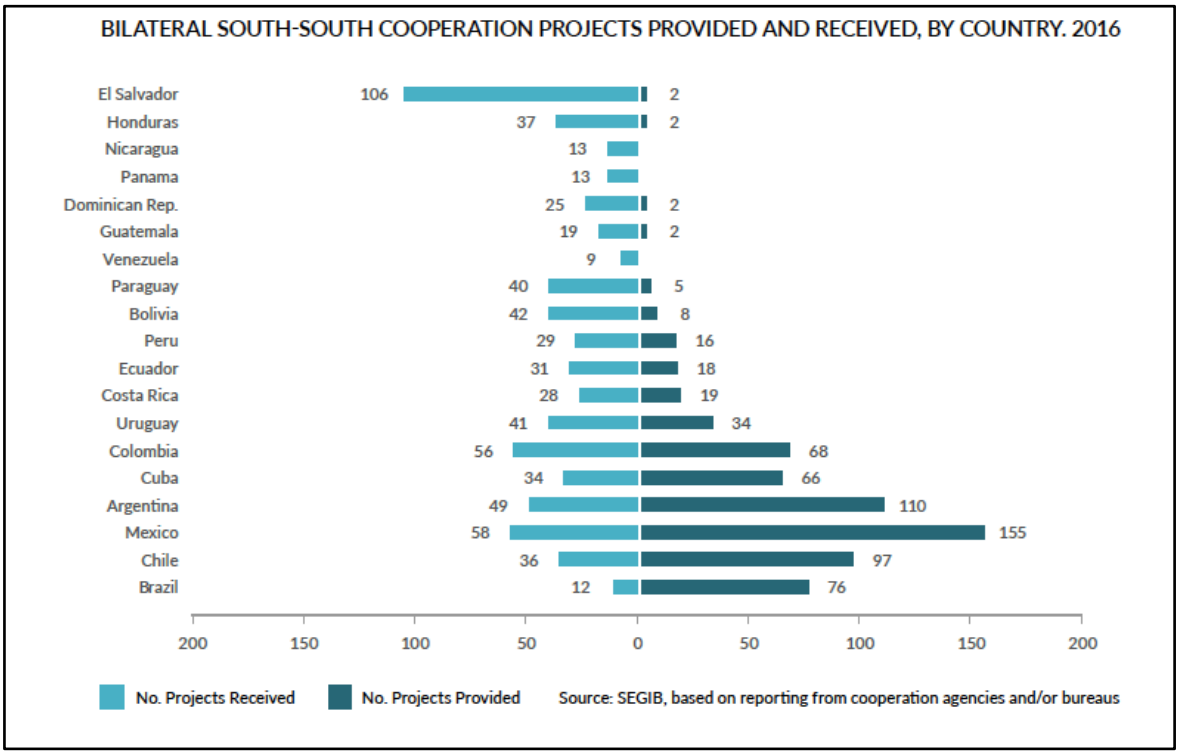

Source: World Bank 2019s; World Bank 2019t.

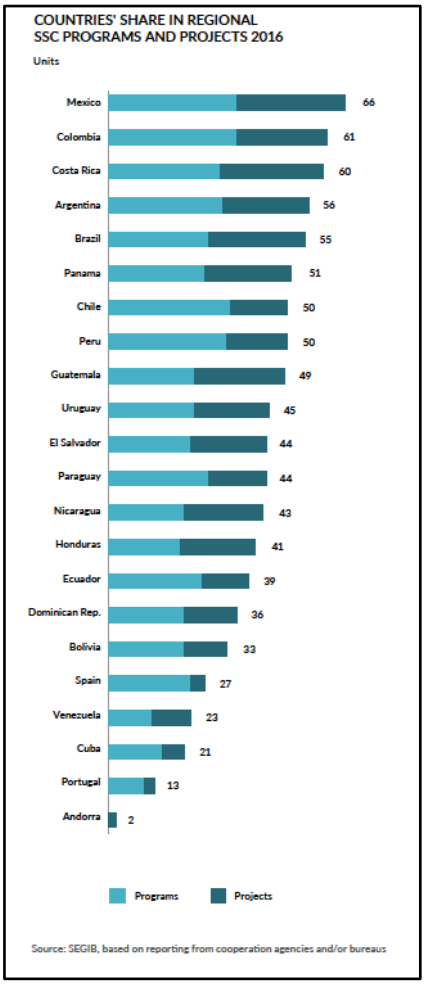
### 3.1.6 Regional comparison: ODA to Mexico and Central American countries (1960-2017)




Source: World Bank 2019u.

### 3.1.7 A snapshot: Regional and bilateral South-South cooperation in Latin America (2016)

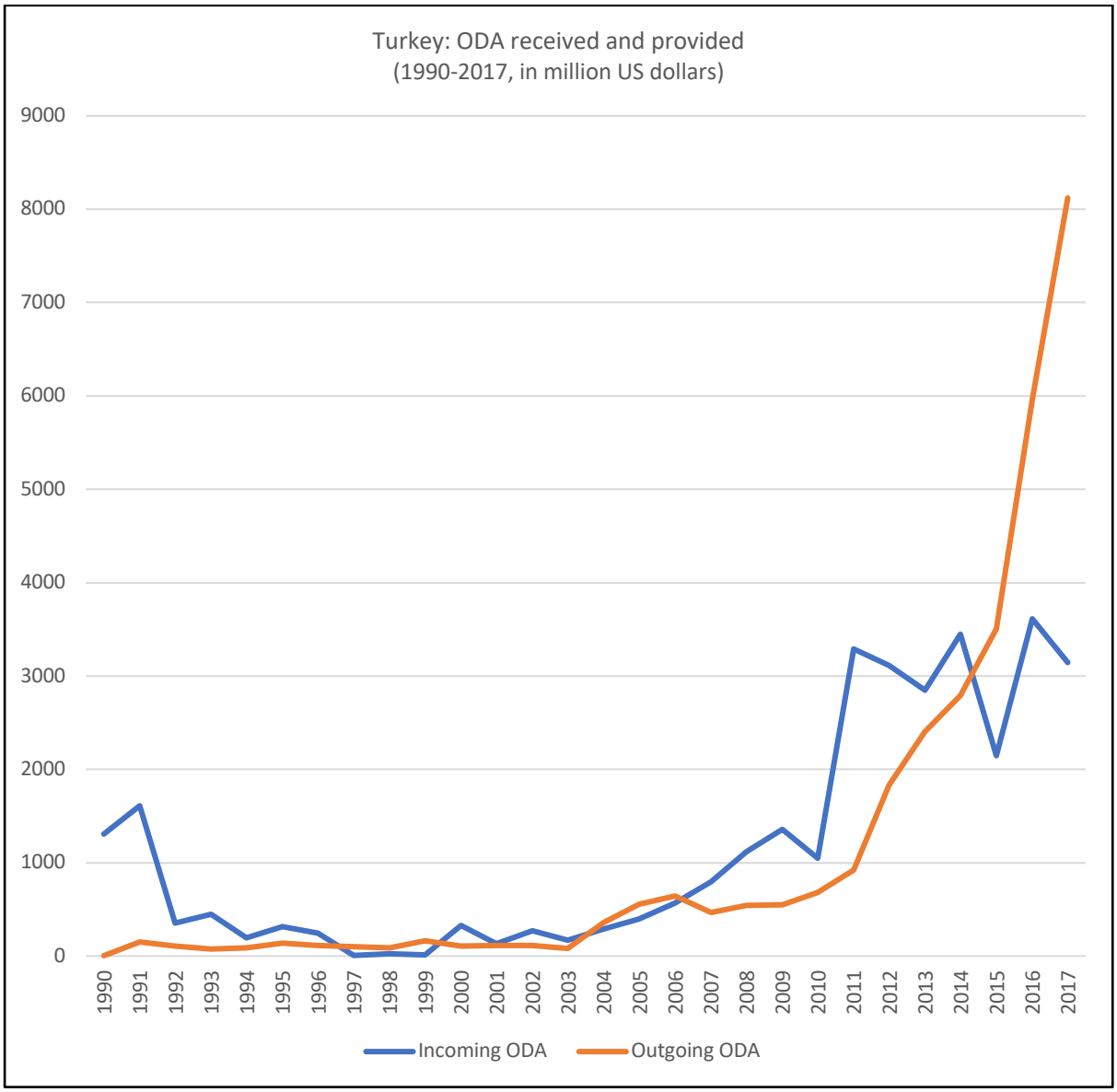



Source: SEGIB 2018, 47 and 132.

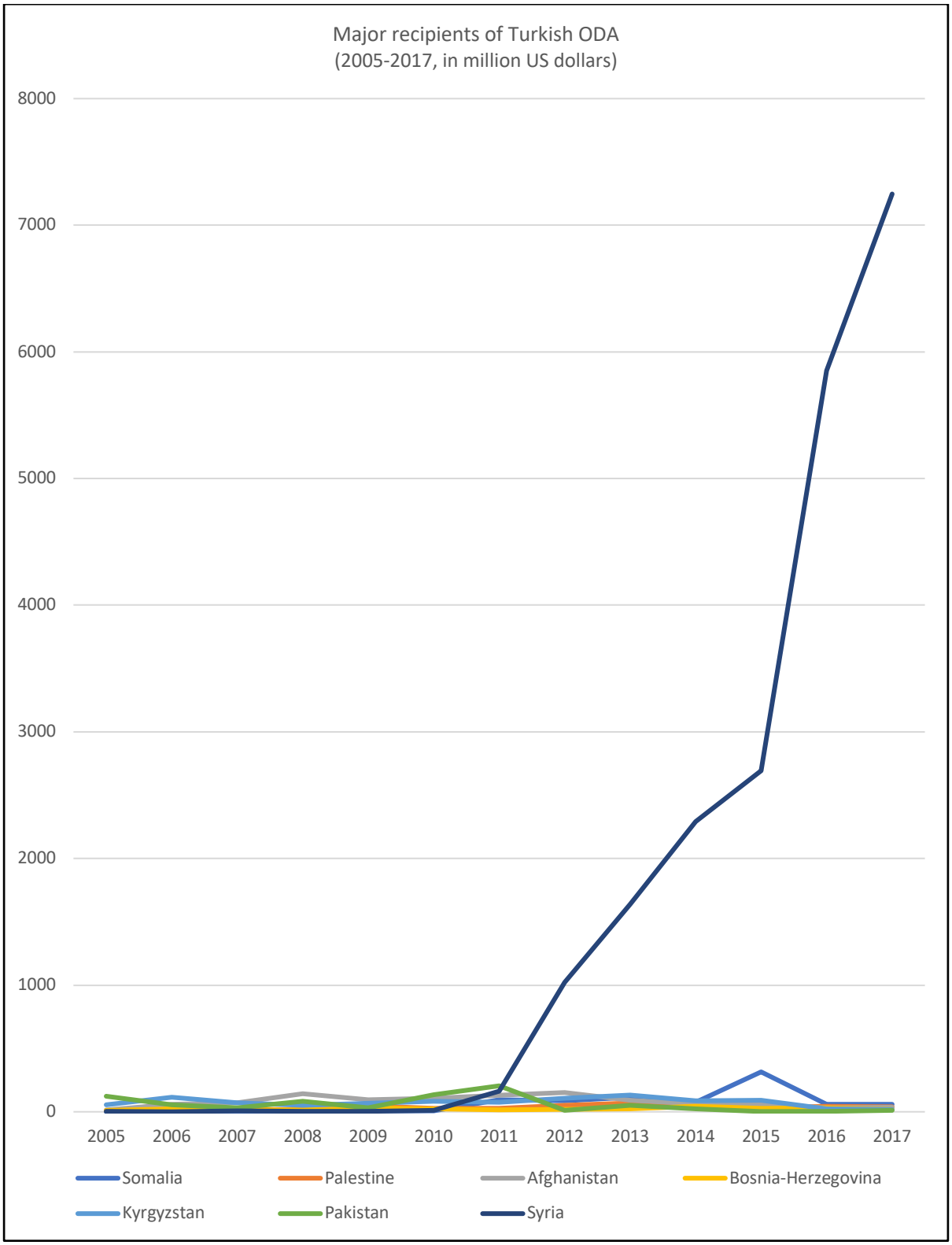
## 3.2 Turkey: development cooperation statistics

### 3.2.1 Publicly available data on what Turkey has received and provided (1990-2017)



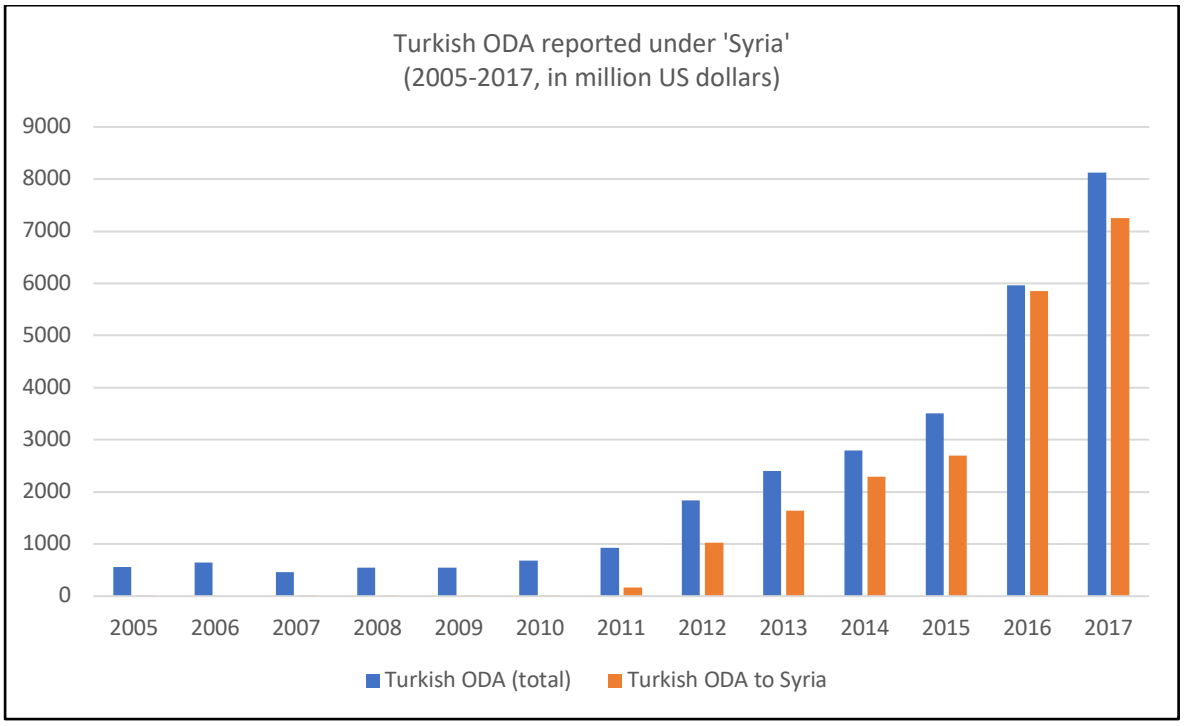

Sources: World Bank 2019v and World Bank 2019y.

### 3.2.2 Turkey as provider: major recipients of Turkish ODA (2005-2017)



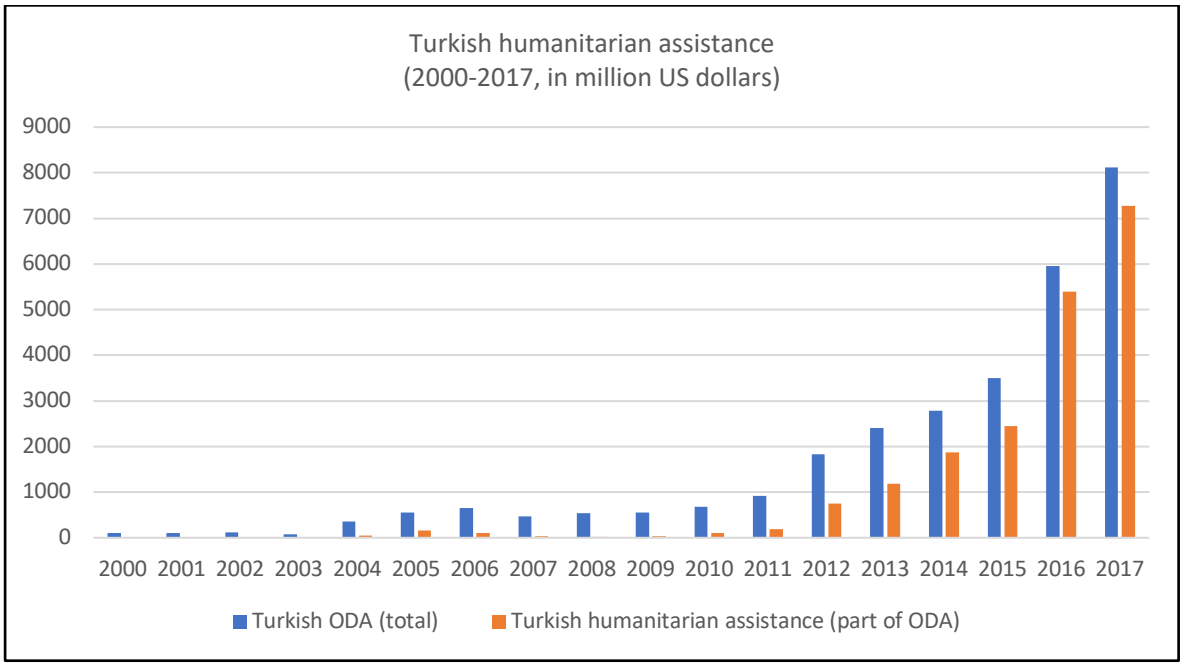

Source: Own elaboration, based on TIKA 2006, 66f; TIKA 2007, 58f; TIKA 2008, 82f; TIKA 2009, 60f; TIKA 2010, 61f; TIKA 2011, 51 and 79f; TIKA 2012, 83; TIKA 2013a, 95; TIKA 2014, 11; TIKA 2015, 11; TIKA 2016a, 17; TIKA 2017a, 17; TIKA 2018f, 19.

### 3.2.3 Turkey as provider: Turkish ODA to Syria (2005-2017)



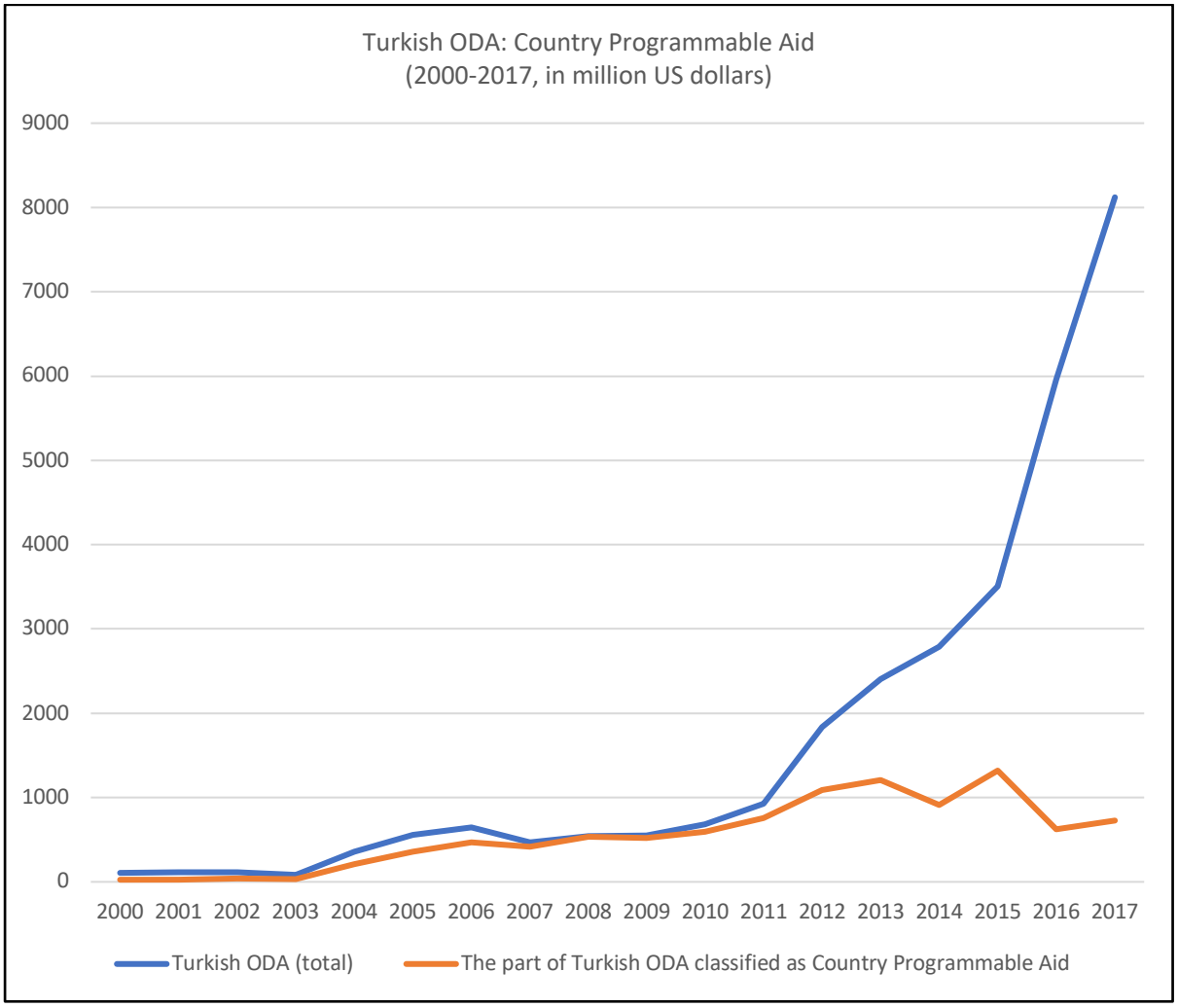

Source: Own elaboration, based on TIKA 2006, 66f; TIKA 2007, 58f; TIKA 2008, 82f; TIKA 2009, 60f; TIKA 2010, 61f; TIKA 2011, 51 and 79f; TIKA 2012, 83; TIKA 2013a, 95; TIKA 2014, 11; TIKA 2015, 11; TIKA 2016a, 17; TIKA 2017a, 17; TIKA 2018f, 19; and World Bank 2019y.

### 3.2.4 Turkey as provider: Turkey's humanitarian assistance (2000-2017)




Sources: World Bank 2019y; OECD 2019v.

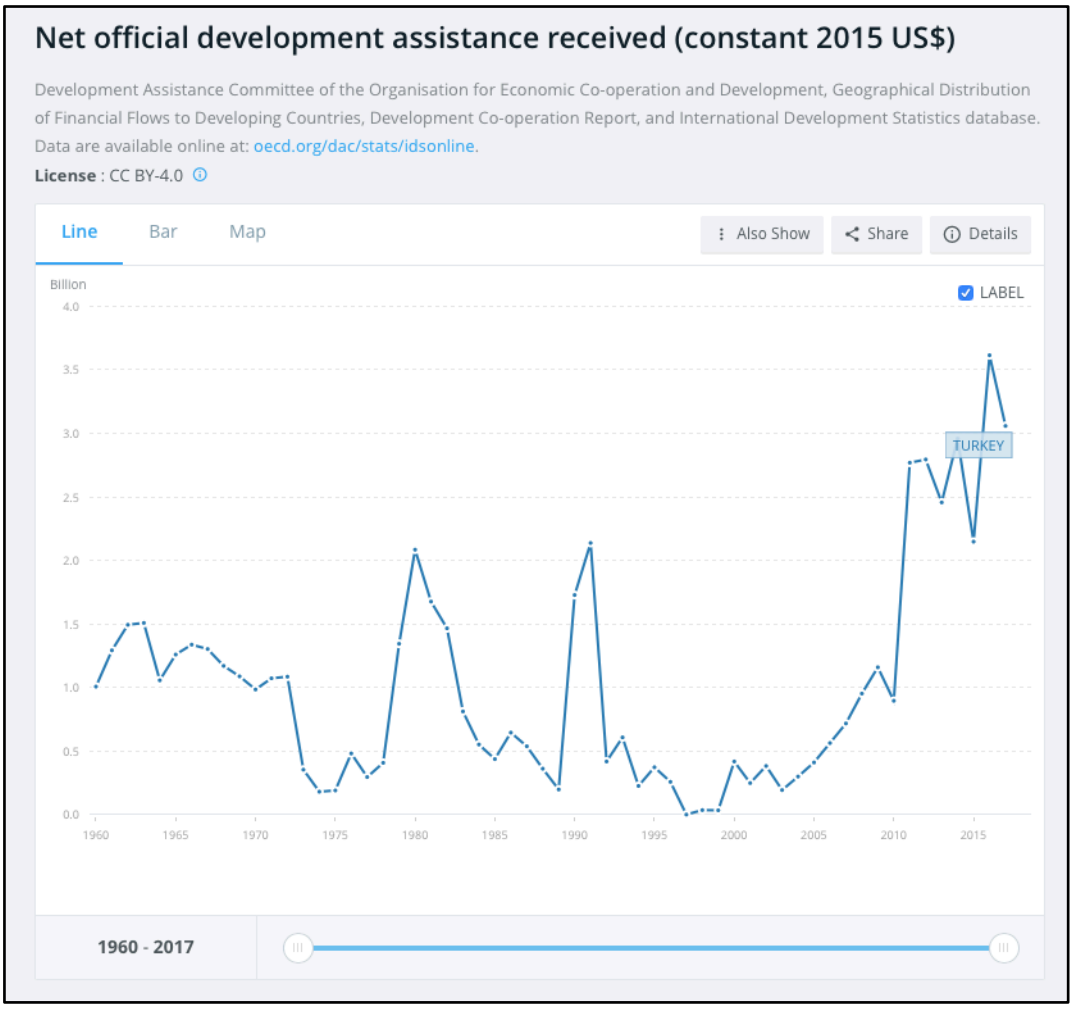
### 3.2.5 Turkey as provider: Country Programmable Aid




Sources: OECD 2019x and OECD 2019y.

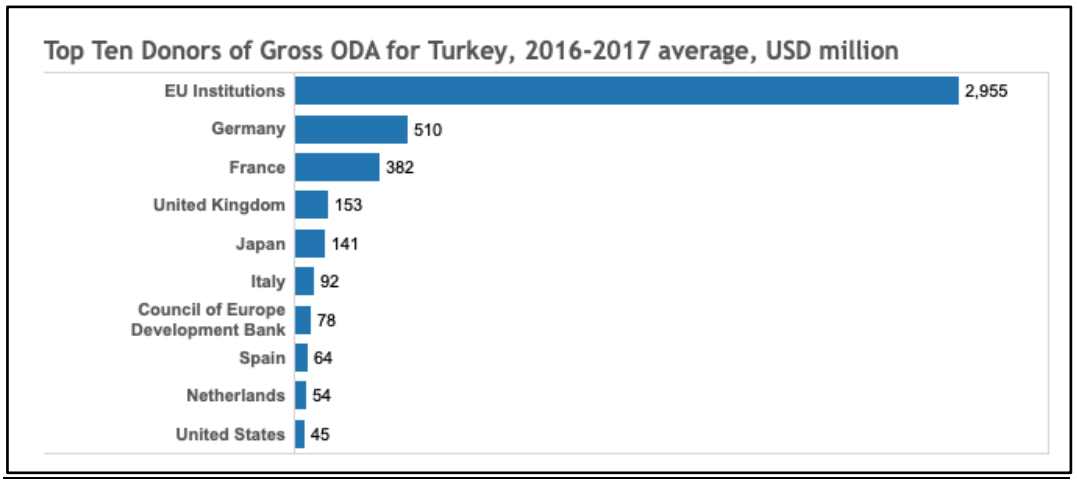
Note: To provide a more detailed picture of where ODA goes, the DAC has introduced a tool – so-called Country Programmable Aid (CPA) – to calculate the amount of resources that directly reach recipient countries (OECD 2019w). Humanitarian aid and in-donor refugee costs, for instance, are excluded from this calculation. Until 2011, Turkish CPA was roughly equivalent to Turkish total ODA – most of Turkish ODA thus directly reached recipient countries. This changed with the onset of the Syrian war and Turkey's decision to allow Syrians to enter Turkish territory. Since 2011, Turkish CPA has continued to fluctuate around the mark of one billion US dollars but has decreased significantly as percentage of Turkish ODA – from 98 percent in 2008 and 82 percent in 2011 to nine percent in 2017.

### 3.2.6 Turkey as recipient: incoming ODA (1960-2017)



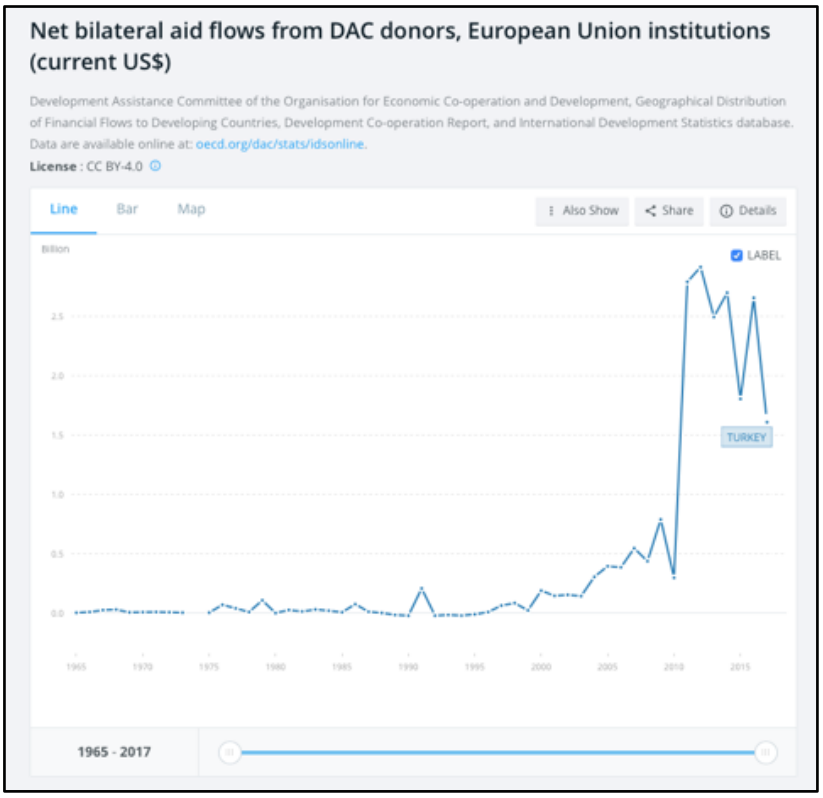

Source: World Bank 2019v.

### 3.2.7 Turkey as recipient: Turkey's top ten ODA donors (2016-2017)

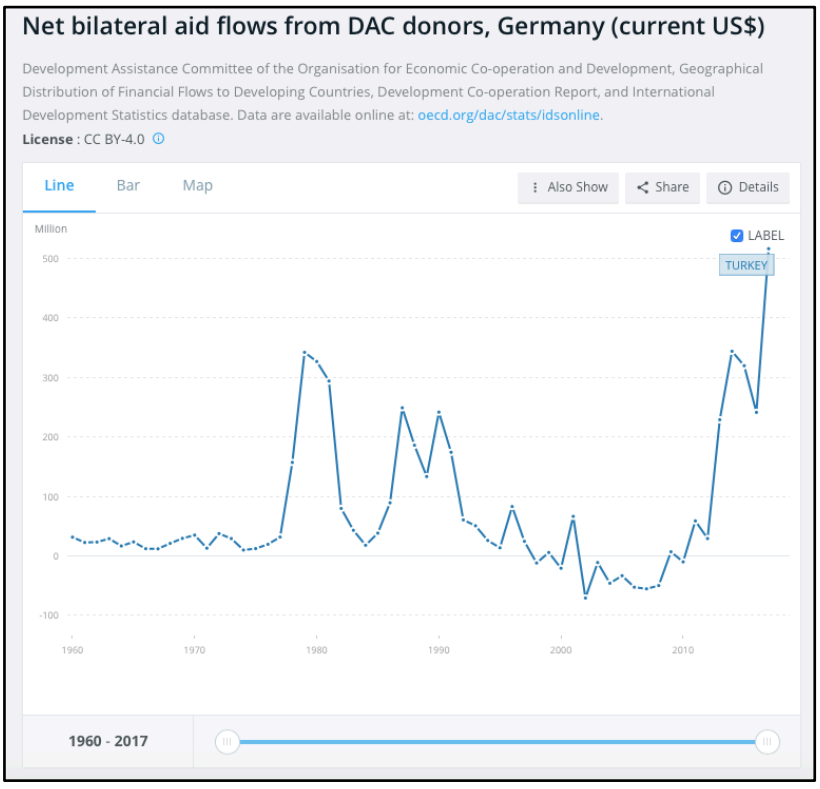



Source: OECD 2019g.

## 3.2.8 Turkey as recipient: Net ODA to Turkey from the EU and Germany (1960s-2017)



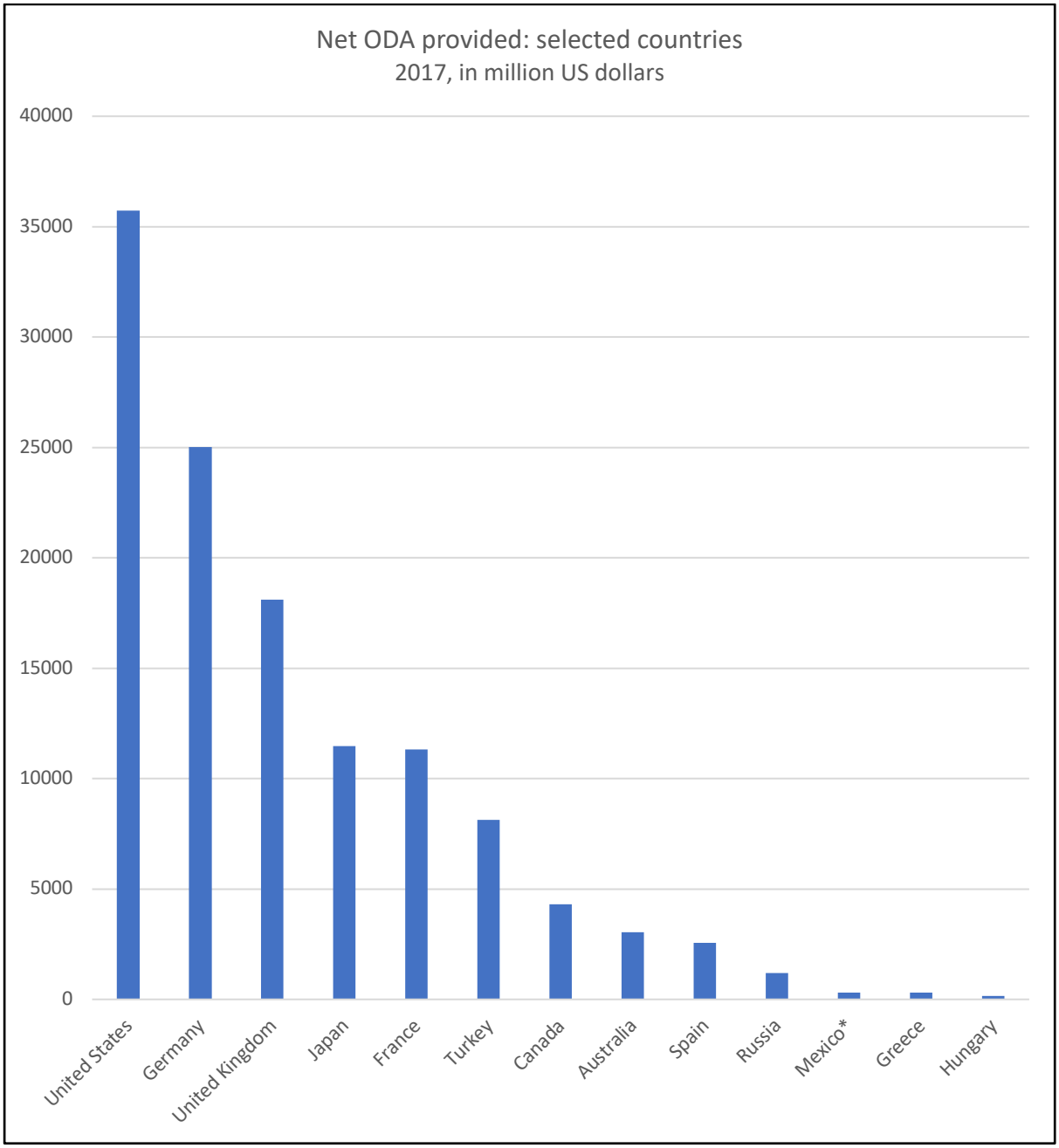

Source: World Bank 2019w.




Source: World Bank 2019x.

## 3.3 Mexico and Turkey: compared to broader dynamics and trends

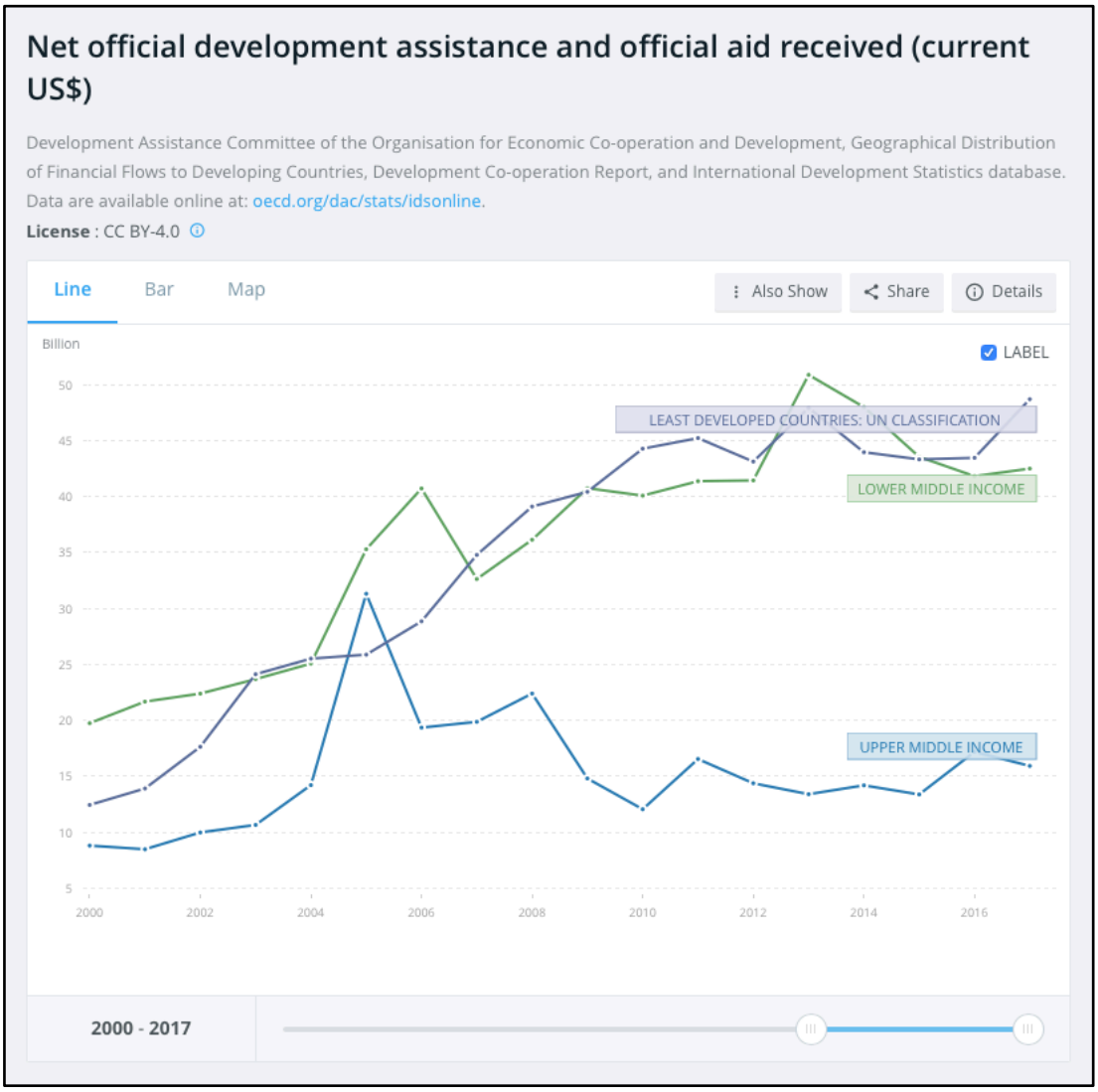
### 3.3.1 Mexico and Turkey as providers: compared to other selected ODA providers

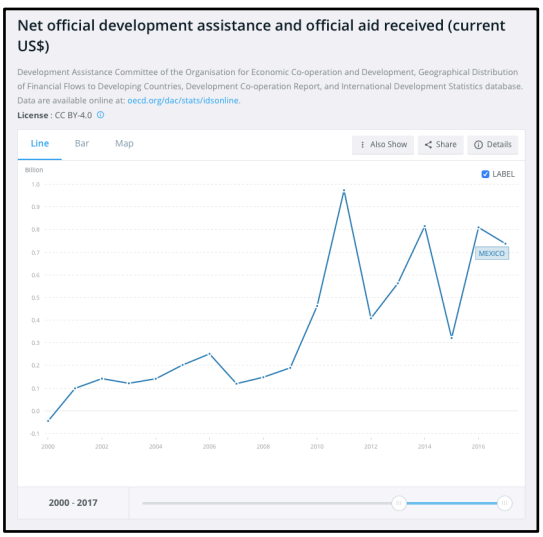


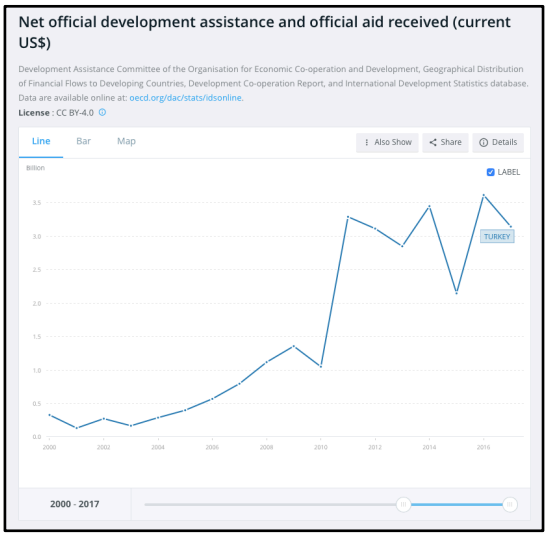

Source: OECD 2019y.

Note: Data for Mexico was added based on AMEXCID's quantification exercise (see AMEXCID 2018m).

## 3.3.2 Mexico and Turkey as recipients: compared to global ODA allocation trends




Sources: World Bank 2019g; World Bank 2019r; Source: World Bank 2019v.

# Annex 4.

## DAC Peer-Review Observer Countries

| | Observer country | Year, and country reviewed |
|---|---|---|
| **One-time observers** | Indonesia | 2011, Canada |
| | Romania | 2012, Finland |
| | Colombia | 2013, Chile |
| | UAE | 2015, Germany |
| | Israel | 2017, Finland |
| | Brazil | 2018, Canada |
| **Two-time observers** | China | 2006 UK<br>2013 Switzerland |
| | Chile | 2012 Korea<br>2016 Spain |
| **Three-time observers** | Turkey | 2005 Germany<br>2008 Norway<br>2010 Poland |
| | Mexico | 2007 Spain<br>2014 Japan<br>2015 Belgium |

Observer countries during DAC peer-review processes (2005-2018), including Special Reviews of non-DAC countries.
Source: Own elaboration, based on data collected during a follow-up interview at the OECD (2019).

# Annex 5.

# Mexico: additional material

5.1 Variations of the AMEXCID logo

5.2 Mexico and the Global Compact on Migration (2018)

5.3 Mexico and the Joint Presidency System of Proyecto Mesoamérica

5.4 A ‘swimming pool’: The first retreat of the Friends of Monterrey in Mexico City (2016)

## 5.1 Variations of the AMEXCID logo

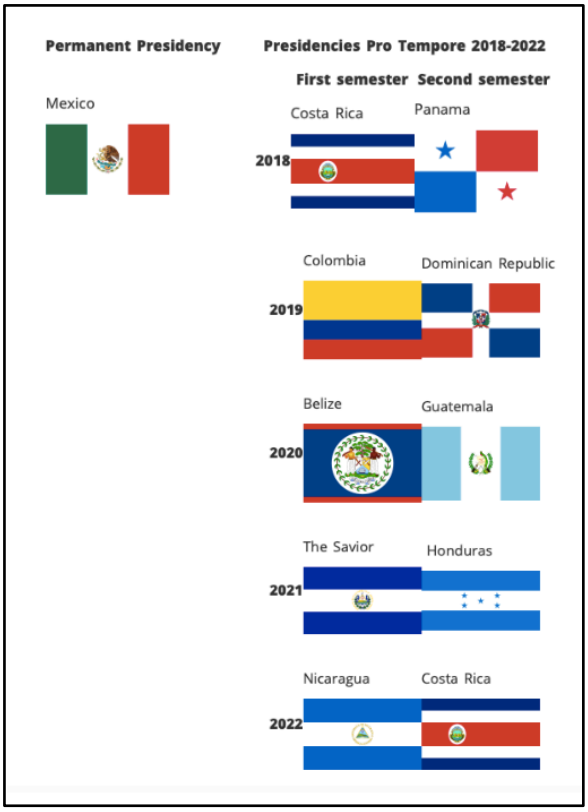

Source: Own elaboration, based on AMEXCID 2018b; AMEXCID 2018c; AMEXCID 2018d.

## 5.2 Mexico and the Global Compact on Migration (2018)


Mexican Ambassador Juan José Gómez Camacho (centre) at the UN General Assembly in July 2018.

Source: UN News 2018.

## 5.3 Mexico and the Joint Presidency System of *Proyecto Mesoamérica*




Source: PM 2019l.

## 5.4 A 'swimming pool': The first retreat of the Friends of Monterrey in Mexico City (2016)


Source: SRE 2016.

# Annex 6.

# Turkey: additional material

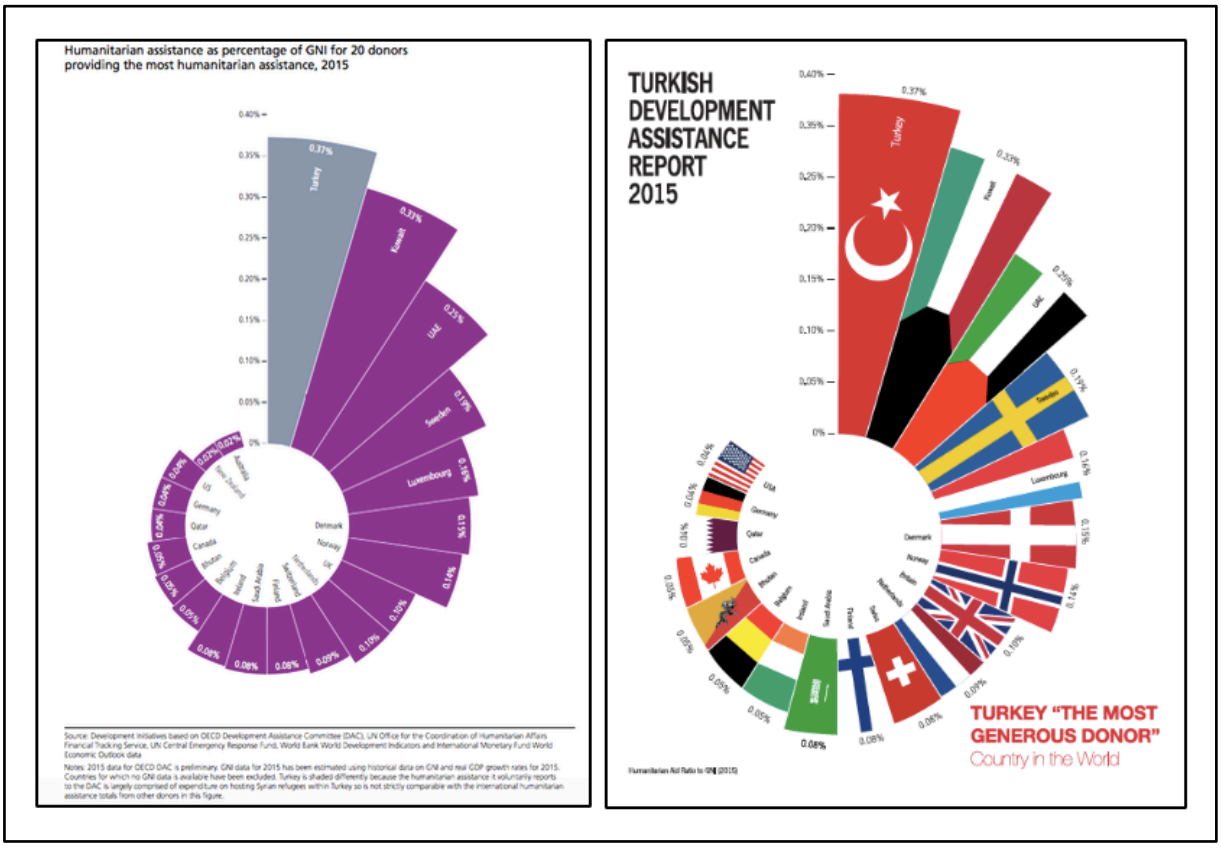
6.1 Turkey: The “most generous donor” country in the world

6.2 A TIKA controversy during the leadup to the 2018 Presidential Elections

6.3 World Humanitarian Summit 2016: a picture

6.4 Inaugurations in 2011 and 2015: Turkey and UNDP

## 6.1 Turkey: The “most generous donor” country in the world




Two slightly different versions of Turkey’s position as a (humanitarian) donor presented by Development Initiatives (2016, 47, left) and TIKA (2017a, right). The footnote (left) says: “Turkey is shaded differently because the humanitarian assistance it voluntarily reports to the DAC is largely comprised of expenditure on hosting Syrian refugees within Turkey so is not strictly comparable with the international humanitarian assistance totals from other donors in this figure.

## 6.2 A TIKA controversy during the leadup to the 2018 Presidential Elections


In the leadup to the Presidential Elections in Turkey in 2018, Meral Akşener, then one of the major opposition candidates, criticised TIKA for its lack of public accountability. This led to what has arguably been the most critical discussion about TIKA in Turkish media. Left: “Akşener: TIKA spends eight billion dollars per year, without bills, [and] it is unclear where this money goes” (Istanbul Gerçeği 2018, 14 June 2018). Right: “Meral Akşener’s ‘TIKA’ statement: I did not say I would close [TIKA] down” (CNN Türk 2018, 11 December 2018).

## 6.3 A World Humanitarian Summit: a picture


UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (left) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (right) as chairs during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, May 2016. Source: Euronews 2016.

## 6.4 Inaugurations: Turkey and UNDP



Picture left: Inauguration of UNDP's Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development, March 2011, with Musa Kulaklıkaya, then TIKA President (second from left) and Helen Clark, then UNDP Administrator (third from left). Source: UNDP 2011b.

Picture right: Inauguration of the UNDP Regional Centre Regional Centre for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States in Istanbul, April 2015, with (from left to right), Cihan Sultanoğlu (then UNDP regional director), Mevlüt Çavusoğlu (then and now Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey), Helen Clark (then UNDP Administrator), and Kadir Topbaş (then Mayor of Istanbul). Source: Terece 2015.